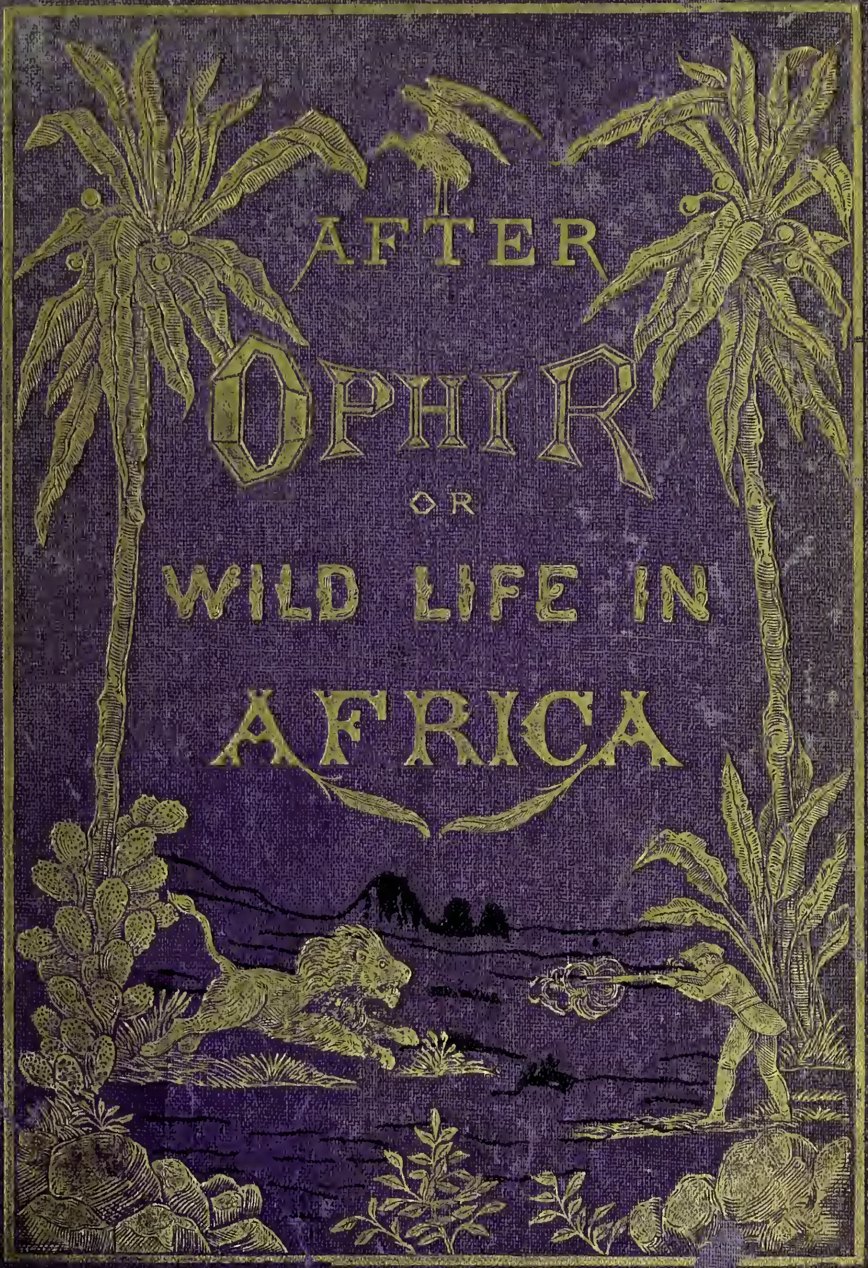

AFTER
OPHIR
OR
WILD LIFE IN
AFRICA

F. H. PARFITT AYRES
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FIGHT BETWEEN THE AMABACCAS.

AFTER OPHIR;

OR,

A Search for the South African Gold Fields.

BY

CAPTAIN AUGUSTUS LINDLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE LOG OF THE FORTUNA."

With numerous Illustrations.

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CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

AFTER OPHIR.

CHAPTER I.

Meditating on the Proposed Journey—Arrival of an Old Chum—News from the New Ophir—Admiral Owen's Theory on the Fleets of Tharshish—Golden Reasons for placing the El Dorado in Africa—Form a Party, and decide to be after Ophir—*Compagnons du Voyage*—Arrival at Natal—Its Appearance—The Ox-Waggon—Custom-House Officers at Durban—"The Harbour Works"—The Young Boers and the Locomotive.

It was a very hot and sultry morning in the early part of June, 1868—and reminded me of old tropical experience—as I sat in my London chambers, thinking, ruminating, weighing the *pros* and *cons*, and trying to make up my mind whether I should leave old England once again, or, like Hamlet, decide that 'twas better to "bear those ills we have, than fly to others that we know not of."

I lighted a fresh Manilla, shifted my easy chair just a little further into the warm rays of the sunshine—creeping, like very incongruous trespassers, over the depressing prospect of the great city's dingy roofs and chimney-pots—and then settled down into a still more profound meditation; with my heels upon the window-sill, my eyes fixed upon a huge yellow "poster," which I had that morning obtained, and whereon, in large capitals, appeared the following conspicuous heading:—

"GOLD! GOLD!! GOLD!!!

THE NEW GOLD FIELDS OF SOUTH AFRICA."

The mythic Queen of Sheba; the fleets of Tharshish; Hiram, king of Tyre; and Hiram, the cunning man; Solomon's Temple; "six hundred

threescore and six talents of gold" per annum; and the Castles of Ophir—the golden myth of so many ages—were the materials with which I built *my* castles in the air.

Not long, however, was I left to the devices of an over-vivid imagination.

Bang—bang—bang at my door, and down went all the baseless fabrics of my noonday dream.

"Ahoy, there! Ahoy! What cheer, old boy; what cheer?" roared the stentorian voice of my old chum and tried friend, Roger Pocklington.

I had been expecting him, so was not surprised. Some few years ago we had served together in the army of the Taiping revolutionists in China, and had gone safe through many wild scenes of peril, warfare, and adventure. Now, being tired of the dull, tame life that a person without any occupation leads in England, we were thinking of making a move again, and trusted that it might be in company.

The fact is, we were restless beings; always longing for the never-ceasing change and excitement of a roving and adventurous life in a wild country. To this we had become accustomed; and every one knows how hard it is to break through the habits and modes of living that grow up as a second nature. No. There was but very little doubt about it; neither I nor my friend were yet fitted to settle down in civilised communities—we should have passed but indifferently well as grave and reverend seigneurs.

"Well, old boy," said Roger, picking out a cheroot, and bringing himself to anchor, "what news of Ophir to-day?"

"News enough," I replied, picking up the last mail's batch of papers, and handing him the *Natal Mercury*.

"Whew!" cried Roger, reading aloud—

"'Potchefstroom, *3rd December*, 1867.

"'SIR,—Mr. H. Hartley, the well-known elephant-hunter, may count amongst the results of his last hunt the discovery of two gold-fields of enormous length; the first of which has been traced and seen in different latitudes to extend to more than eighty miles in extent, by from two to three miles in breadth. The other is twenty-two miles broad, and promises to be most valuable. . . . . I may mention that many smaller and isolated veins containing this precious metal have been discovered. . . .

"By Jove! Now then, just listen to what follows," exclaimed Roger.

"'The vast extent and beauty of these gold-fields is such that, at a particular spot, I stood, as it were,

transfixed, riveted to the place, struck with amazement and wonder at the sight, and for a few minutes was unable to use the hammer. Thousands of persons might here find ample room to work on this extensive gold-field, without interfering with one another. The above I can vouch for as facts, and specimens now in my possession will prove their truth. C. MAUCH, *Naturalist.*'"

"Well, what do you think of that, Roger?" I inquired, when he had read the startling paragraph.

"Think! Why that, if it's true, we can make our fortunes. But who is this Mauk—Mauch—what's his name? How is he authenticated or corroborated?"

"By all the South African papers. Here they are. The whole thing seems definitely settled. Mauch is termed 'Herr,' and is stated to be a *savant* travelling and exploring under the auspices of Dr. Petermann, of Gotha, the well-known editor of the *Geographical Journal;* besides, he is known as an accredited and commissioned explorer of the Geographical Society of Gotha. So the man must be respectable enough, and his reports reliable. He has declared that his discoveries surpass the gold-fields of either California or Australia, and others corroborate him. All the colonial papers support him; and it is again declared that the auriferous site of Ophir has been re-discovered. Now, old boy, I vote that we wait for the next mail, and then, supposing that the statements are still credited, and receive fresh confirmation, be off at once."

"Carried *nem. con.*," cried Roger, adding, "then hey for Ophir and its nuggets!"

Before having this conversation, we had taken pains to investigate all evidence as to the existence of gold in south-eastern Africa. One of the greatest modern authorities we came across was the late Admiral Owen, who had surveyed the whole of that coast, and who, besides finding virgin gold in the possession of the natives, formed an ingenious and seemingly logical theory that old Solomon's Ophir must have been in the vicinity of Sofala—which he considered a corruption of the ancient name—because, by reason of the build and sailing qualities of the fleets of Tharshish, and the steady, unalterable character of the prevailing trade winds or monsoons, their voyage to and fro from Solomon's abode to that place would have occupied just the "three years" mentioned in the Scriptures.

Ancient geographers, from time immemorial, have placed that tantalising *ignis fatuus* of an Ophir on the continent of Africa. Amongst others, the well-known authorities Gosselin and D'Anville have favourably commented upon them.

The editor of the *Port Elizabeth Telegraph* stated himself to be in possession of a remarkable "Geography of the World," which was published in 1646; and that the author, under the division of Ethiopia Superior, which he divides into five regions, states that the third is called Monomolapa, and is reported to contain *three thousand mines of gold.*

Then we heard of the map compiled by one Monsieur de la Rochette, in 1783, the same proving him either to have been an ingenious thinker in the geographical line, or to have possessed a much better acquaintance with the interior of Africa than those who now follow in his footsteps. The respected editor of the *Cape Argus*, commenting upon this same ancient map, affirms that the discoveries of Baker, Speke, Grant, and Livingstone are but "confirmations of those made and published generations ago." Then, last but not least, Herr Mauch's gold-fields are well known, as we are told that "taking Zwartkop's Bay as a base, a straight line of a thousand miles, in a course nearly due north, crosses two localities which are marked by Rochette as gold mines. A little further northward—say another hundred miles—we come across a district marked '*very rich in gold!*'"

But, more than all—above all—we were impressed with the prophetic utterances of Sir Roderick Murchison, the world-famed President of the Royal Geographical Society. I believe that he predicted the existence of gold in California; and it is notorious that, prior to its discovery in Australia, he publicly declared his opinion that the precious metal ought to be found in the Australian Alps, from the remarkable coincidence of their structure with that of the Ural Mountains. But he has also further remarked that the same physical laws were applicable to the great mountain-chain of south-eastern Africa. After the lapse of nearly a quarter of a century, these opinions seemed to be proved correct.

It is also known that the Portuguese traded during many years, a century ago, for gold-dust, in the neighbourhood of Sofala, Delagoa Bay, and Inham-

bane, not far from the mouth of the Zambesi River, and in somewhere about the same latitude as this last discovery of Ophir.

That gold existed in those latitudes was certain. The only question was, as to its exact whereabouts and quantity.

I was quite ready to hail Sir Roderick Murchison as a prophet, and the late Admiral Owen as an authority upon the fleets of Tharshish; I would willingly admit that the vessels may have returned from an African El Dorado, "bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes." Yes, there are apes enough in Africa; but where from, I should like to know, came the "peacocks," the "precious stones," and the "great plenty of alumg trees?"

"Well," said Roger, sententiously, when I put this proposition before him, "the peacocks may have all flown away, the precious stones may be out of date, and no longer considered precious, and the alumg trees may have been all cut down to build the Temple, which, by all accounts, must have absorbed a young forest, at least."

So we agreed to waive that question, and not bother ourselves about the jewels, the peacocks, and the alumg trees, especially as we had but very vague ideas as to what sort of vegetables the latter might be. Gold, apes, and ivory certainly remained; and the first of these things would suffice for us.

At this time, as a writer on the subject very pertinently put it, we began to reflect that "the power of the precious metal, whether found in grains or nuggets, has transcended the influence of all the systems of morality, philosophy, jurisprudence, legislation, or government ever known. The wilderness feels its power, and cities, with all their throbbing impulses and gigantic virtues and vices, spring into existence as by an omnipotent volition. What can it not do or undo? What won't it buy, or what not pay for?"

Yes, the gold fever had come strong upon us, and we were destined to suffer for it.

Besides this, however, two other causes had combined to decoy us to the wilds of Africa; and the triad, irresistible together, overcame our last lingering doubts and scruples. Firstly, we suffered from the restlessness and love of change inherent in those who have for years led a life of travel and adventure. Secondly, a guide-book to that *terra incognita*, Natal, through

which colony it was necessary to pass in order to reach the gold regions—a guide-book awful in its knowledge of good and evil, highly glorifying that unknown land, and setting forth the unequalled advantages of settling at a place so singularly favoured by Nature, and where a benign government would give you a farm of two or three hundred acres for nothing—had not a little to do with fixing our determination, for, if gold failed, here we were, turned into sons of the soil, and with rich farms to fall back upon. Thirdly, lastly, and most powerfully, came, both within and beyond Natal—

> "Gold! gold! gold! gold!
> Bright and yellow, hard and cold,
> Molten, graven, hammered, and rolled;
> Heavy to get and light to hold;
> Hoarded, bartered, bought, and sold;
> Stolen, borrowed, squandered, doled;
> Spurned by the young, but hugged by the old
> To the very verge of the churchyard mould;
> Price of many a crime untold;
> Gold! gold! gold! gold!"

Now I venture to appeal to my discerning readers, is not the prospect of a large and valuable estate, free gratis and for nothing, with the chance of finding a rich gold mine in the centre of it, quite sufficient provocation to induce the emigration of Her Majesty's lieges? Of course it is, and certainly in our case prevailed.

To read that awful book, and to consult its erudite compiler, the Government Emigration Agent for Natal, was to learn that no such other Paradise existed under the sun, and that no other spot on earth contained such varied natural riches as its professedly teeming plantations of coffee, sugar, arrowroot, cotton, tobacco, &c.

Having patiently awaited the arrival of the next Cape mail, we received, on the 7th of July, the following additional intelligence:—

> "News has been received from the *new gold diggings* in South Africa. Captain Black, with the Potchefstrom party of gold-diggers, had arrived at Shoostrong, the chief Matjen's head *kraal, whose country is rich in gold-fields*. . . . Matjen had received the party in a friendly manner, *and pointed out the treasure.*"

This, together with similar news in other papers, decided us to start at



FISHING SMACKS IN THE CHANNEL.

once, so as to be among the earliest arrivals at the new El Dorado—the last-discovered gold-field in the world, and which, at the same time, by a singular coincidence, was supposed to be the most ancient.

Besides Roger and myself, three of our friends, also victims to the gold fever, joined themselves to our party, and started after Ophir. They were the Messrs. Tom and William Ashwell, brothers, Transatlantic in their nationality; besides Monsieur Louis de Glon, a young Swiss, of Teutonic race.

As our "enlightened citizens" could not leave London just yet, it was agreed that they should follow by steam, and join us at Natal. The rest of our party engaged passage in that lively—particularly lively—and well-known trader, the barque *Priscilla.*

The rough weather we experienced in the Channel at starting kept most of our fellow-passengers out of sight until, off the Lizard, the weather moderated, and all hands showed up to have a look at the fishing-smacks, among which we were continually passing.

Horridly dull and unenlivened was the voyage out; uncomfortable, into the bargain, for I dare venture to affirm that seldom, either before, at present, or hereafter, were, are, or ever will be gathered together so unmannerly and cantankerous a set of individuals as were most of our fellow-passengers.

One extremely lanky young man, of twenty-three summers or thereabouts—who had married the day before sailing, and had left his wife behind, and who generally became beery, maudlin, and affectionate several times a day—invariably began every conversation with, "My uncle, you know, the Lord High Treasurer at Natal, and son of Lord F.," &c. No matter what might be the subject, that unfortunate official was bound to be dragged into it somehow. Much joy do I wish him of his hopeful nephew!

Then we had a rough-looking party, addicted to bad language and playing the cornet, who—with a flashy sort of wife—was always bragging about "their family hestate and all," in a county with which no one on board besides themselves seemed acquainted. This funny fellow at first rather tried to encourage the idea that he had been an officer, but the attempt soon collapsed when he found himself in the company of competent censors.

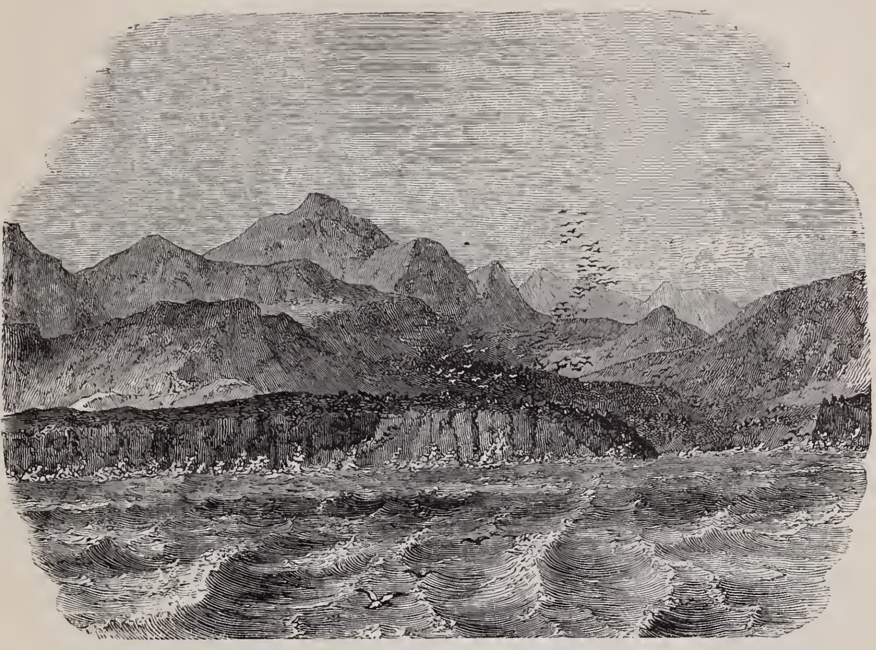
Our captain was a very pious man, an ardent follower of John Wesley, and gave us each day a theological display extraordinary. The poor man was, no doubt, sincere enough; but his zeal very much distanced his discretion and attainments. When he read the Bible, at every sentence he interpolated such strange commentaries of his own as produced only a very painful burlesque. He was in the habit of going round the decks, seizing upon all he could, and mysteriously informing them that "they must pray or perish;" whereas, in point of fact, we came much nearer to perishing through praying—or rather humouring the old man by listening to his wonderful rhapsodies—upon two occasions, when the ship was taken aback by a heavy squall, whilst all hands were in the cabin with him, except the man at the wheel.

Incidents of the voyage may be returned as *nil.* I can only remember two trifling events apart from the general discomfort and monotony. One day we caught a bonita, a fish hardly two feet long, but which, nevertheless, possesses such strength that the one in question fairly electrified the writer, and almost shook his right arm off when he tried to hold it by the tail, after hauling it up to the jib-boom end. Upon another occasion we saw, or thought that we saw, a white whale in the distance; indeed, some who fancied that they beheld the strange object declared it to be *very* like that monster of the deep.

On the eightieth day of our passage we came within sight of land, and caught our first glimpse of south-east Africa, at a part near the mouth of the St. John's River, where steep cliffs and rugged broken ranges of mountains stretched far as the eye could reach.

Upon the eighty-second day after leaving London, our vessel came to anchor off Natal. My first impressions, produced by the nature of the scenery, were far from being favourable.

Nothing but dense low bush can be seen clothing successive stretches of sand or rock along the shores of this colony, which, for all its importance, and all the interest felt therein by the British public at large, may be concisely enough described as an Anglo-African settlement between the Equator and the South Pole. Should there be any one so curious as to wish for further



OUR FIRST VIEW OF SOUTH-EAST AFRICA.

information, he will find that Natal lies on the south-east coast of Africa; that its centre is in about latitude 29° 20′ south, and longitude 30° 20′ east, and that it contains about 18,000 square miles, with a sea-coast of about 130 miles in length. Gazing upon its shores, in vain one thinks of the mighty baobab, that giant of the forest, which in some parts of Africa has been found with a trunk thirty feet in *diameter*, and an age that some of the highest scientific authorities have computed at over five thousand years! The land possesses a very unpleasing and dwarfed appearance; not alone from the presence of so many flat-topped hills, but from the stunted aspect of all its vegetation. Not a single exogenous stem attains the altitude of even forty

feet upon this coast; at about twenty feet everything in the shape of a branch is flattened down, and not a twig can rise above that arbitrary level. This singular law is most conspicuously illustrated by the growth and varieties of a tree the colonists name "flat-top," the summit of which is as level and sharply cut off as if it had grown against a solid roof. It is as though some deadly vapour, noxious to every form of vegetable life, were floating at that low altitude.

Upon arriving at Durban (the only port Natal possesses), and vainly looking for its bay—the same that the before-mentioned awful guide-book declared second only to that glorious feature of Naples!—I saw nothing but a long, shallow sheet of water, a mere ugly puddle by the side of that to which it has been so absurdly compared; with bush and sand on one side, sand and bush on the other.

Now, for the first time, I became acquainted with that primitive mode of travelling, that simple style of conveyance invented in the very dark, if not antediluvian ages, the ox-waggon. Drawn up on the beach, waiting for a cargo to the town, was a mighty, cumbersome sort of vehicle, and a span of sixteen oxen, with a waterproof tent-shaped cover.

I have noticed in many colonies that the heavier their rate of import and export taxation, *pari passu*, the less flourishing their condition. Thus, despite the dubious new charm—the mystic halo of bygone Sheba's queen and Ophir's gold—now shed upon this land, I could not avoid a feeling of dissatisfaction at the greedy avidity with which sundry old-fashioned, *outré*, and faded individuals of the *douane* seized upon our valuables at landing.

On ascertaining the high rate of tariff, and having to pay four shillings per pound duty on some cigars, and ten shillings each barrel on fire-arms that had travelled with him free of charge all round the world ere this, the historian's usual equanimity of temper became somewhat ruffled, and he did thereupon incontinently speak out his mind to the official payee, a pompous, grey old fop, whose assumptions of grandeur were most ludicrous, and whose prominent characteristic seemed to be a conviction that it was his bounden duty to be as vexatious and annoying to strangers as he possibly could, in order that they might fully recognise his power, importance, and authority.

"Aha!" exclaimed our friend Louis, as we disembarked and proceeded towards the shore; "vat for ist dat?"

Looking in the direction indicated, we saw an extraordinary mixture and conglomeration of piles, stones, and beams, stretching its ungainly length far out on the sea from an out-of-the-way part of the beach, like some huge millepede stalking over the deep. This strange structure, we ascertained, was styled the "Harbour Works," and had been designed to deepen the bar; but, for all the service it has proved, it might just as well have been erected either at Van Dieman's Land or Kamschatka. The ingenuity attachedto the monstrosity consists in its having swallowed up something like £150,000; otherwise it is entirely innocuous. It is solely serviceable to excite the wonder of stray Kaffirs, the contempt of those it was intended to serve, the ferocity of those who were taxed to pay for it, and, lastly, renders its only usefulness by serving as a coign of vantage from which remarkably dirty little boys of varied race catch sprats.

We found a singularly ancient and decrepit locomotive in the habit of travelling on a short single line railway, from the Point, or harbour, to the town, a distance of about a mile and a half. Upon trusting ourselves to this particularly insecure conveyance, at the imminent risk of break-down or bursting boiler, so soon as we started off—with a wheezy puff, some very formidable groans, and much excruciating creaking—we were not a little surprised at the strange antics of five or six lumpish, broad-faced, vacant-looking, pale-haired men, who ran along by the side of the dilapidated engine, stooping down to peer beneath it, and uttering the while guttural exclamations of delight. Instead of turning out to be stray lunatics, they were resolved into young Boers from the Dutch colony known as "The Transvaal Republic." It seemed that they had brought wool to Natal for sale, that they had never before seen the sea, or even been without the borders of their state; and the strange iron monster being an extraordinary novelty to them, they were looking about underneath to see what sort of legs it had!

CHAPTER II.

Houses built upon the Sands—Durban Dignity—The Town: its Deathly Dulness—Unsocial Population—Sectarianism—Bad News of Ophir—A Durban Philanthropist—Form our Expedition, and Start for the Umtwalumi in search of Solomon's Gold-fields—Scenery *en route*—Camping out—Waggon travelling *à la Boer*—*Al fresco* Concerts—Casting Diamond Ballast—Arrive at the Umtwalumi River—Gold Diggers and their Specimens—Our Tent.

ALAS for the wisdom of the Durbanites! We found that, like the foolish man, they had built their houses on the sand. Nevertheless, as there were some few comfortable boarding-houses and hotels, at mine inn I took mine ease for a couple of weeks, to recruit after the sea-voyage, the sea-fare, and the perils of the vasty deep.

Durban is an irregular-built town of perhaps six hundred houses, with about three thousand European inhabitants. There are many stores—not *shops;* and many storekeepers—not *shopkeepers.* People stand on their dignity (or something in the place of it) here; and, like brother Jonathan, think one man as good as another, and a great deal better too. Should you have the unparalleled audacity to call even the dealer in cabbages "a shop-keeper," he would retort by either calling you unpleasant names, or by trying to alter the lineaments of your countenance, unrestrained by any moral respect for that angelic portion of the human form divine. It must, however, be conceded that the young men behind the counters here are, as a rule, superior in birth, breeding, and education to their *confrères* in England.

Many of the stores are substantial buildings of either brick or stone. But the streets! Well, they are awful. Although wide, roomy, and laid out at right angles to each other, they are but poorly found in side-walks (which, indeed, often prove mere pitfalls), and they are composed of nothing but the deep, heavy, and omnipresent sand upon which the town is built. Rain, instead of making these original streets either dirty, muddy, or impassable, only improves them, and is a great comfort; it damps the sand, wets it into a firmer consistency, and then sinks deep from the surface; so that, instead of

floundering more than ankle-deep in fine, soft sand, you can walk along on top of it.

At first view the place strongly reminded me of Saigon, the French colony in Cochin-China ; there were the same half-bungalow, half-villa style of houses, with little sandy gardens, containing the banana, guava, and lo-quat ; the same air of stagnation, apathy, and want of prosperity ; and the same wide sandy streets.

In this lively place we found that the stores began to close about four o'clock every afternoon, and that by five o'clock not a being—at least, not a *white* being, for Kaffir labourers still lingered about—was to be seen abroad, except, perhaps, a few inebriated mariners up on liberty from the ships in port.

We soon perceived that the grand ambition of young Natal was to climb outside a tall horse, a pony—anything on four legs—and sport his figure through the sandy streets, raising a cloud behind him, from the closing hour until five. Then, *blasé* with this excitement, the riders follow the example of the rest of the population, quietly subside, and vanish out of sight. During the cool evenings, the only enjoyable part of the day, hardly a soul is to be seen about. So dull, so silent, so unutterably lifeless and dismally oppressive are the streets of Durban after sunset, that one might fairly fancy himself within the city of the dead. The people seem spiritless, solitary, and unsocial. Such things as public meeting together or assembling of the population at amusement, exhibition, or promenade (though such relaxation and intercourse tends to elevate the spirits, warm the social instincts, and increase the natural human sympathies) are, like angels visits, few and far between. Whenever straggling citizens are seen at even-time, their only anxiety seems a desire to get home again as soon as possible, to hide themselves from the light of the moon and the eye of man. For nearly a score of years I have been a wanderer in various parts of this round and, let me add, curious sphere of ours, but never, in all my experience, did I come across so dead-and-alive a place as Durban, or one that could exercise anything like so deathly a damper, so dull a depression on the spirits.

In this small community are many different places of different worship ;

and, in proportion, a great many more "canteens"—they are so genteel forsooth! these Natalians, that they cannot either tolerate the word "public-house," or endure the sound thereof.

Since their worthy bishop took it into his disputatious head to try and dispose of the Bible by rule of three, these enviable colonists have all turned theologians; but how they reconcile their loud-mouthed professions of Christianity with their diversity of opinion, and the fact that they are always quarrelling about it, always cursing one another with anathema and maranatha, deponent sayeth not. Dissenters of divers denominations do largely predominate. Then come Colensoites; next Otherites, including those who stand by the spiritual Church of England, as against that by *law* established in Natal, and eschew the schismatic rule of three. They are badly off, these disciples of orthodoxy, and, as Colenso holds the churches, have literally to hold their services in an "upper chamber."

Of course, one of our first inquiries was concerning the latest intelligence from the "Victoria Gold-fields," as the auriferous discoveries in the far interior had been already christened.

The sum total of our investigations amounted to this:—It had been proved that the precious metal existed in very small quantity in quartz reefs near the Tate or Tatin River, in the Matebele country, some nine hundred miles due north of Natal; but no proof was yet forthcoming as to the presence of gold in *payable* quantity. Not one ounce, one pennyweight even, was to be seen as obtained from there, from the place of which its discoverer wrote the sweeping, unreserved report given in our first chapter, which excited our expectations so highly.

This was a sad damper to our cherished expectations; still, we knew that even the richest gold-fields of Australia were not developed very rapidly, and we knew, besides, that the existence of even the smallest quantity of gold always warranted a further search.

At the store of one of the leading supporters of the auriferous excitement —"the auriferous ass," as subsequent arrivals of diggers from Australia euphonistically named him—we saw nearly half a ton weight of quartz that had been carried all the way from the Tatin by a party under one black. They can

have known but very little about gold-finding, that was evident, and it rather kept up our spirits; fancy carting ten hundredweight of valueless stone nine hundred miles! This stuff came from Herr Mauch's "hammer arresting" discovery, was sent to England for analysis, and, I believe, was found to contain no trace of the "noble metal." Still, it was the right description of quartz, so that, at least, was slightly encouraging.

Besides this, we were shown a small bit of quartz the size of a pigeon's egg, through which ran a small vein of gold that might have weighed three or four grains. We were *told* that this came from the Tatin, and had been sent down by Mauch. It was sent to England with the other stuff, and, soon after, back to the "auriferous" gentleman came an elaborate official report of analysis—1,150 ounces of gold to the ton! (Eleven pennyweights pay well in Australia, and represent about the average returns.) But I should like to see the *whole* ton of quartz from which that minute specimen had been broken —if, indeed, it ever came from the Tatin at all; for not another such piece has since been found, although the place has been thoroughly well prospected, and it *has* been said that the choice little morsel was carefully carried over from New Zealand for him who exhibited it—one of the Natal land speculators (owning estates in the Transvaal also)—who is very anxious for emigrants and tenants, and is philanthropical—very!

This, at all events, was perfectly palpable to our, perhaps, limited understandings—there were a number of speculators leagued together in puffing up and exaggerating the unsettled gold discovery, from personal and interested motives.

As the Tatin just then held out no urgent temptation for a costly and immediate journey so far inland, whilst the existence of the precious metal within Natal itself had been lately proved, we decided that it would be wiser first to prospect in the latter country, and, at the same time, obtain a personal acquaintance with the government lands, on which we each held grants of two hundred acres, with four hundred reserve for future purchase.

Our American friends having by this time arrived in the *Asia*, one of the "Cape of Good Hope Company's" steamers, we banded together, bought a waggon and team of fourteen oxen, hired a couple of Kaffirs, laid in a good

supply of tools, provisions, &c., and started for the Umtwalumi river, about seventy miles down the coast, south-west of Durban, where a few specks of gold had lately been discovered, and where we hoped to re-discover Ophir's gold.

Early in the morning, whilst only a few forlorn natives were to be seen about, up to our hotel gate, through a cloud of dust, rolled our ponderous conveyance. Our effects were soon embarked, and then the five of us set off for a delightful morning walk, just as the bright golden sun came gleaming upon us over the tops of the distant hills.

"Yak! yak!" shrilly shrieked our sable driver to his horned team, cracking his long whip, making it whistle and whirl about the oxen in a manner truly terrific.

Then, with a creak and a roll, we were under weigh at last, "with a hull team and a dog beneath the bar," as one of our party, Will Ashwell, the "long Yankee," as he became euphoniously denominated, expressively observed. There was a violent stamping and trampling in the sand; a confused tossing and lifting of mighty horns, a broad swerve of the team from side to side (at which the driver cursed his compatriot, the "forelouper" or leader, in choice low Dutch, his own language not containing sufficiently formidable expletives); when, like a labouring ship in a sea-way, the heavy camp-tent waggon began to move, and off we went after Ophir.

That relic of the old Dutch colonists, that primitive, antediluvian-looking monster of a vehicle, was now fairly under weigh, at the rate of about two knots an hour, in light or ballast trim.

The ox-waggon is the only means of transport in this colony; and, despite its ancient, hugely massive, and unwieldy structure, is the only machine that could endure for any length of time in such a country, carrying heavy weights up and down such ceaseless rocky hills, and through such frequent mountain streams, with jagged stony beds. Nevertheless, travelling *à la Boer* is one of the slowest and most unique systems of locomotion, one of the most inconvenient and uncomfortable, to which a white man ever was a martyr.

The waggon itself is a long bottom of three-inch plank, ten feet long by four broad; so that it looks very narrow with regard to its length. Heavy solid axles support it upon two pairs of massive wheels; it has strong wooden



AN INDUSTRIOUS SETTLER.

sides, about two feet high, with a rounded canvas tent-covering on the top. The first and best two oxen yoke to the heavy wooden shaft, or *dusselboom;* whilst the rest of the team—numbering anything you please, from twelve to twenty-four—link to a stout *trek-chain*, or rope of hide. Here we have a contrivance that the Dutch Africanders often inhabited for months—like gipsies in a travelling tinker's shop, or caravan—and the heart of him of the *dopper*, or, retrogressive *régime*, the soul of the genuine Boer, knoweth no greater bliss, feeleth no higher aspiration.

Soon after leaving Durban we passed an energetic colonist, who must have been up with the lark (if they have any larks in Natal, which I am inclined to doubt), and who was hard at work, ploughing, on his own farm, whilst several Kaffir labourers were hoeing away, to clear the heavy crop of weeds and brambles out of the way of the plough. The land had evidently been lying fallow for a long time, which was something unusual so near the town. No doubt the law had a little to do with it; lawsuits, unfortunately, like his allegiance, following the true and free-born Briton about wherever he may go. This sturdy specimen seemed happy enough; had a comfortable little bungalow cottage, containing, no doubt, a buxom English wife and chubby olive-branches—at least, we had reason to fancy so, for the "long Yankee" hailed the settler as we passed, and gravely inquired as to the health of his better-half, to which he replied that she was "werry well, thankee."

After clearing the Durban sands, we came to a rocky part of the—well, certainly not what English readers would understand by the word road. It was nothing but "here we go up, up, up; and now we go down, down, down," for ever so long. "Grofer! Grofer!" screamed our driver to his mate, perverting the Dutch word to "screw up." Then that agile young mate would bound behind the wagon, screw up the break, rush frantically back to guide the leading oxen, and off down hill, or rather precipice, would go the ponderous concern, with a slip, slide, and a rush, much like the descent of a young avalanche. At times, like the poet's wounded snake, through volumes of heavy sand, our caravan would painfully drag its slow length along; anon, like some huge lizard, crawl upon the narrow ledge or road (please read

"ironical," as the immortal Artemus Ward would have said), scarped by art and nature on the side of some stupendous precipice. Whenever the road became comparatively level on the lower ground, there was just sufficient room for the waggon to pass between the dense jungle on either hand; and as the soil was often heavy sand, whilst the tangled mass of vegetation frequently arched and closed so much overhead as to prevent the penetration of the slightest breath of air, the heat beneath that blazing African summer sun became intolerable.

I shall not soon forget the descent of our first hill. Away went the oxen at a run, whilst the driver, leaping and yelling at their side—more like a sable demon than a human nigger—cracked his loud whip, and cursed his unhappy *aide* more vigorously than ever. The whole contrivance was, of course, perfectly unmanageable till it reached the bottom. In order (as *he* said) to make his cattle fear him, our coachee had decorated his broad straw hat with somewhere near a large sackful of fowl-feathers, stuck on end around it; and as the forelouper had imitated his master, the ludicrous result of their quaint device, as they went jumping and bobbing up and down, may easily be conceived. Like fiery fragments shot from that eccentric pyrotechnic engine termed a "flower-pot," forth from the inner recesses of our rattling vehicle were varied portions of our valuables discharged all down that steep descent. At one fell swoop went all our crockery; henceforth were we reduced to tin and hardware. In the vainness of his imagination, one of our band—the young German with pale eyes and much yellow hair—had brought with him one of those modern and uncouth fashionable instruments of torture for the head. As he came rushing after the waggon—his tangled tresses streaming in the breeze, and his capacious pockets filled with stones—the which he was industriously collecting, having heard of the reported diamond discoveries in another part of Africa—his footsteps were suddenly arrested by my side, as I was collecting the scattered contents of an exploded carpet-bag, and I heard him cry aloud—

"Ach! Ach! Der teufel! Dere ist den mien goot 'chimbly-pod' all in 'stove.'"

He meant to say that his good "chimney-pot" was "stove in." The sea

voyage, being his first, had made his vernacular rather technically nautical; and this was apt to lead to strange confusion, by making his rather unintelligible English more mysteriously incomprehensible than ever. Sure enough, his favourite hat had fared badly. It was lying carefully deposited between the top of a bare flat rock and the bottom of the heavy case containing our ammunition, lead, nails, and other heavy articles.

"Never mind, Dutchy," said the "long Yankee." "Guess yew don't require yew're stove-pipe style of head-dress out here, unless yew're likely to turn missioner."

But the Teuton was wrath, grieved, and refused consolation. He stood in an attitude of sorrow, gazing upon the tattered remnants of what was once equal to ten-and-six, then lent a hand to lift the case back into the waggon, and spoke no more for five minutes. I think it was the reflection upon ten-and-six that troubled him.

Camping out in Natal we found to be exceedingly enjoyable. The weather was very propitious, and the tramping appetising; so *damper*, steak, and plenty of fresh milk from the nearest Kaffir *kraal*, with porridge of fine white mealie-meal, or maize, were all things which we keenly relished. The *fête champêtre* and the life *à la gitana* are pleasing and healthful changes for a time from the trammels, confinement, and debilitating effects of our high state of European civilisation. Though out here we had not much either of picturesque beauty or of Nature's glories around us, still there was a certain wildness about the bush-covered hills, and something even a little romantic in the brawling mountain streams where, here and there, they ran on clear beds of glassy rock or shining sand, between rugged cliffs and tangled brushwood. But, far above everything, our principal enjoyment was the careless freedom, the wild *abandon* of this sort of life; the thoughtless ease with which we lolled upon the verdant turf, gulped down huge draughts of pure, invigorating air, and did just exactly that which seemed good unto ourselves. As the road we travelled lay parallel to the coast, we had the deep blue sea—always grand and beautiful—far away along the eastern horizon, where it blended in exquisite harmony of colour with the cloudless azure of the tropic sky overhead. During this fine weather it was positively a pleasure

to prepare and cook our own food, to bake *dampers* amongst the hot ashes, to smoke our pipes and spin our yarns around the camp fire.

When night came on we found our sleeping accommodation rather circumscribed, to say the least, for five of us; as stores, baggage, and other gear occupied much of the waggon, whilst it would have taken too much time and trouble to pitch the large tent we carried every evening. However, the first night out, our long Yankee friend having picked out a snug spot, and having already deposited his elongated carcase therein, considerately proposed that two or three of us could sleep beneath the waggon. But the last snake story was fresh in our minds—how that an unfortunate Dutch traveller had turned into his hammock slung under his waggon, and had been found dead in it in the morning, already offensive to the olfactory sense, with two little punctures on one of his little toes! No, hot as it was, crowded as we were, and thick as the midges or sand-flies swarmed inside the waggon, there we one and all remained; though our Kaffirs, apathetically enough, were stretched out and snoring with two-horse power upon the grass beneath it, immediately they had grabbed up and bolted the last handful of their evening meal from the porridge-pot.

Most undoubtedly the crowding was inconvenient. In the morning our lanky American cousin was found with one foot in the butter-jar and the other in a treacle-pot; whilst that young Dutchman was vehemently upbraided for the destruction of such few eggs as had been spared to us by the waggon, for we discovered him at daylight with his ponderous frame firmly wedged amongst the ova.

Despite the snake yarns, we arrived at the Umtwalumi without any authentic instance of encountering a solitary sample. It is true that one of our party once thought he saw a blue serpent (none of such colour in the colony), and another freely guessed that he had fallen in with a formidable specimen of the "varmint," but these were events open to considerable doubt.

Then, one morning, our egg-destroyer came running up, his long Teutonic locks standing out behind, and vociferated—

"Gum on! Gum on mit der goons! Der ist von snaag so pig ast mien leg in der bush dere!"



CAMPING OUT.

But on reaching the spot to which he led us, with our entire armament of shot-guns, the monstrous reptile subsided into one of the huge Natal parasitical creepers, harmlessly and naturally twined around a bush tree.

The tedious nature of waggon travelling may be easily imagined when its average speed of fifteen or twenty miles a day is known. The usual plan is to in-span at daylight, *trek* for three hours, out-span and allow the oxen to rest and feed for a couple, in-span for another three, then halt as before, and a third move of the same duration brings sunset and a camping-place for the night ; though, should the latter be moonlight, then is the time to travel, after a long respite during the intense mid-day heat. The Kaffirs make but ordinary drivers, neither are Europeans much better ; it is the Africander of Dutch descent—that kidnapper of native children—the "orphans," made so by his long "roer," the genuine Boer of either the Transvaal or the Orange Free State, who makes the *beau ideal* of an ox waggoner. But this epithet must not be applied to those Britons who gain a livelihood as carriers and drivers ; *their* genteel pretensions would be outraged by so commonplace a designation. A spade must be termed an agricultural implement. "Transport rider" is the sounding designation by which you must address them. Our "long Yankee" could not agree at all with these gentlemen ; their aristocratic hankering after euphonious titles did not suit his democratic spirit and republican notions, and so, to avoid the risk of Transatlantic *argumenta ad hominem*, we had engaged a native to drive.

The Natalians carry their *penchant* for genteel and sonorous titles nearly as far as the Sicilians. Even the wretched little wayside inns, found most unexpectedly in wonderfully out-of-the-way places here and there, are to be known as "Accommodation Houses." Accommodation, forsooth ! We know of but one thing that they could accommodate, and that was not so small as its British congener, and was very industrious at night. These lively asylums for the weary traveller we found no better than their prototype, the *posada* of Spain, where the proprietor, with unalterable dignity, to the hungry traveller's query, placidly replies that he can have "anything," yet, when pressed for details, successively makes answer, "Nõ hai, Senor," until you come to the domain of stale eggs, black bread, and sour wine; for these delicacies, in

Natal, you meet with the national staples—pumpkins, mealies, sweet-potatoes, and colonial rum that would kill at forty paces.

Our evenings, when camped out, were usually "a feast of reason and a flow of soul," enlivened not unfrequently with harmony—at least, we thought it such, though I am not without grave doubt that there was more of a body of noise than of the soul of music. We had a cornet, which our German-Swiss comrade was *learning* to play. I was not above the use of bones. Roger used a strange instrument formed with thin paper and a large comb. The "long Yankee" used our largest iron pan as a big drum, upon which he declared his ability to play solos; whilst his brother took the smallest one for something treble—"terrible," as the elongated *frater*, with calm assurance, oblivious to the nature of his own performances, wittily observed. These concerts never failed in exciting the huge satisfaction of the wondering natives. Stray Kaffirs from adjacent regions, to which the sound of our instrumental efforts penetrated, would assemble round us; but whether they admired our energetic exertions as the classic muse, or as awe-inspiring invocation to our strange gods, I could never exactly ascertain.

There was one recurrent incident of this our first journey in Africa which must be duly chronicled. Every night we found it necessary to cast ballast, by slyly throwing overboard out of the waggon the numerous specimens of our diamondiferous Dædalus, who usually collected about fifty pounds weight of common quartz, pebbles, and crystals *per diem*.

It was more by luck than by good fortune that we arrived at the Umtwalumi, after five days' *trek*, without any accident, and without a smashed waggon or broken necks.

This river—considered one of second-rate size in Natal—at the drift where we crossed it, twelve miles from the sea, was about twenty-five yards across, and not more than three feet deep. But then, in a few hours, after a heavy rainfall inland, I have seen it rise more than ten feet, and rush foaming and roaring along with great rapidity, to waste its sudden force and fierceness in the sea. Crossing to the other side with our waggon, we *treked* a short distance up the Little Umgeni, one of its tributaries, and proceeded to outspan and encamp upon the small alluvial flat where the minute particles of

gold had been discovered. Here we found four parties of diggers already assembled. They were, of course, all white men; for that "noble savage," the Kaffir, scorns the idea of mining for gold, though some have ingenuously confessed to me that they would not mind digging if fine fat oxen could be turned up. Cattle constitute their only property and aim through life, and purchase all they require—wives, to work for, gratify, and support them in a life of lordly ease and laziness.

To honour our arrival, the digger community combined in holding public holiday. Naturally enough, we began to ask for specimens, and professed our anxiety to become optically convinced as to the existence of Natal gold. Alas! what these deluded diggers had to exhibit was so minute in size, and so extremely small in quantity, that it almost required a steam-power microscope to make it visible. Moreover, but one of the four parties could boast of even this next to impalpable sample. One of the happy possessors brought forth a large paper packet, from which, to our great curiosity and amusement, he began to unwrap fold after fold, until nearly a quire of foolscap had been taken off, and all to bring forth such a ludicrously small and insignificant collection! The best of it was, no sooner had the treasure been fairly exposed to our inspection and the light of day, than the breath of some envious though gentle zephyr blew it all away.

"Well, old boy," said Roger, after this, "I think we're sold. Eh?"

"Yaas! Der teufel! Vere ist den der goold—der Over—der blace vere old Zolomans toog der dousands talents—der dousands dousands talents vrom?" exclaimed Louis, getting very excited, and becoming very red in the physiognomy.

"Don't kick up a muss, Dutchy," chimed in the "long Yankee." "Affairs auriferous, this child takes the liberty to guess, are looking gloomy, but why should you put your spleen out of order and get your dander riz? Men who go to new gold-fields must expect a pretty rough time of it before they find anything. Take it easy, hoss, and stand it like a man—like a Dutchman, I mean."

Our friend was philosophical, at least. And as we had gone to search for Ophir with a "mind," like Eugene Aram's, "equal to either fate," the



OUR TENT.

exposition was not obnoxious to any one but Monsieur Louis, who, alas! had been by far too sanguine. Before leaving England he had told every one he knew that *he* would not spend or waste his gold, but that he would deposit it in the bank every week.

Having pitched our tent on a verdant patch of turf not far from the limpid little stream, and comfortably under the lee of a clump of bush that sheltered it from the direction whence the only storms might be expected, we removed all necessary portions of our paraphernalia from the waggon, spread our rugs at luxurious length after the late confinement, and spent our first evening under canvas very jollily.

CHAPTER III.

"Native Reserves"—The Gold Diggers—A Sable Venus—A Nocturnal Adventure with a Mysterious Visitor—Pleasures of "Prospecting"—I turn Builder—The Result of my Handiwork—Thomas, my Valet—My First Snake—Meet an Alligator under Water—The Gold Formation—Beef, Mutton, and Mealies—Adventure with a Wolf—A Huge Wild Boar.

FINDING that all the best land in the neighbourhood of the Umtwalumi was occupied by Kaffirs—to whom, in a fit of generosity, the Colonial Government had granted it—useless would it have been to waste our time in trying to pick out our land-grants where all the country round about was wasted on the dear blacks, who, done up in their war-paint, either passed their time in strutting about or in idleness, whilst their wives tilled sufficient ground to keep their capacious appetites satisfied. Thus our attention was wholly given to "prospecting" for the precious metal beyond these "native reserves."

The diggers already on the place displayed but little practical or theoretic knowledge of the business. One party of two did nothing at all but wander listlessly about, asking others for news—but then their food had been supplied by the over-credulous citizens of Durban. Another hopeful band went to work in the most unlikely places no inconsiderable ingenuity could have found; whilst a third—composed of young colonists, wise in their own conceit, and too big to be taught—was busily employed sinking a capacious shaft in the rotten bed-rock, where its members might have continued working until they came out at the other side, without finding a speck of gold, even had the surrounding country been overburdened with it.

"Wal, strangers," said our "long Yankee" to this interesting party one morning, as they were digging away some twelve or fourteen feet below the surface, "guess you are making a *tarnation* wide hole here"—it was more like the foundation for a house than a miner's shaft—"s'pose you're allowing room for the big nuggets to come up!"

"Oh, we 're right enough!" shouted a voice in reply from down below. "First-class indications when we began; found five specks in three days!"



DIGGERS AT THE UMTWALUMI.

"Wal, how much deeper do you calculate on sinking in 'five-speck gully?'" continued our friend.

"Till we strike gold; sure to get it on the bed-rock," responded the subterranean voice.

"Wal, stranger," replied the "long Yankee," "I reckon you 're bound for the other side, at that rate. So I advise you to stick up a board on top here, like the man who sank for ile"—petroleum—"in the State of Maine. All his friends came wondering round his hole, and bothered that enlightened citizen so much with their inquisitive dispositions, that at last, when he went to work the next day, he just stuck up a board with the inscription, 'H—l, oil, or China;' you ken put in gold for 'ile,' and let the rest stand."

These young Natalians did not like the Yankee's "chaff," but that did not ruffle *his* imperturbable equanimity in the least.

The fourth party of diggers was under Government auspices, and was headed by a *protégé* of that perspicuous assembly of Natal's always mistaken

legislators. This gentleman seemed to be remarkably well satisfied with himself, and did not appear in the least unconscious of his own peculiar merits and qualifications, though others were. He was occupied in spending £40 a month of the Colonial revenue in digging a ditch and bringing a head of water a distance of two miles, in order to obtain hydraulic pressure with which to "sluice" the flat; and all this waste of money and labour, with twenty Kaffirs and three Europeans, was taking place without the previous precaution of testing the ground at different parts, in order to ascertain whether it would pay for the outlay! The ingenious commander-in-chief of this party, although professing to be a mineralogist, geologist, or some other sort of *ist*, did not strike us as being in danger of astonishing the world.

Oh, "ye gentlemen of England that live at home in ease," just consider the following startling and disconcerting incident of my first morning at the Umtwalumi, especially such of you as may be troubled with *mauvaise honte*, or timidity in the presence of the ladies! Arising at daylight, and proceeding to obtain a mouthful of the delicious early morning air, what was my amazement and confusion to encounter at the door of our tent—standing still, patient, motionless as the statue of that virtue carved in ebony, and elegantly balancing a basket on the top of her head—the almost perfectly nude figure of a young, tall, and well-made sable Venus! Her drapery was, indeed, of the very scantiest. But that charming damsel felt not nor betrayed the most incipient sign of blushing shame or maidenly confusion. Not she. No more than did that celebrated lady with the beautiful bust, when, being asked if the rather nude position in which she sat for a model did not make her feel uncomfortable, naïvely replied that it was rather *cold!* Cold! If she felt only rather cold, certainly I felt rather warm. This, however, did not in the least disturb that negress hussy's charming equanimity. She made no attempt to spare my blushes. Upon the contrary, saluting me with the native salutation, "Sa ka bono" (expressing delight to see you), and bestowing on me a smile of affability that revealed the full extent of her by no means trifling lips and shining white ivories, she took the basket off her head, walked right up to me, placed it at my feet, and then, in soft, melodious accents, began, as I thought, the confession of her love. Although by this time I had picked up a little of

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OUR EARLY VISITOR.

the native vernacular, I suppose that I must have been rather too confused and startled to understand her, so I just popped my head inside the tent again, and shouted—

"Here, Will! Turn out, turn out! Here's a visitor come to see you—a young lady in déshabillé."

"What! A gal? Where is she?" cried my friend, flinging off his rug and running to the door.

It would have taken considerably more than an event like this to ruffle the "long Yankee's" imperturbable self-possession, and soon, with the few words at his command, he was complacently conversing with that mentally and bodily unembarrassed nymph upon the best of terms.

It turned out that what I had taken for a love offering was only a basket of maize, or mealies, that she had brought to us for sale.

This incident created no little amusement among us, mostly at my expense, as the "long Yankee" did not fail to rally me most unmercifully for "being kind of Bull-Run panic-stricken at a naked nigger gal," and for mistaking her offer to trade for a protestation of affection.

We found that this robust young Kaffir girl had already walked a distance

of some two or three miles, over steep hills and across several streams, from her *kraal*, in order to do business with us. In future, every morning at daylight, or soon after, she made her appearance with several bottles of milk, and brought sweet potatoes, pumpkins, eggs, or fowls, as we required them.

By-the-by, I must not forget to narrate a rather singular and amusing circumstance that befell me during our first night under canvas. Towards the small hours of the morning I was awakened by the loud and peculiar cry of what I thought to be some large bird, as we had all heard similar sounds during the evening, and had so interpreted them. This extraordinary noise resembled the combined quacking of a duck, cackling of a hen, croaking of a bull-frog, and grating or rasping *ad libitum*, and, as it evidently proceeded from between one of the sides of the tent and the extra "fly," or awning, I seized my "double-barrel," and cautiously crept out into the moonlight, filled with the philosophic ardour of obtaining some new specimen of unknown species with which to enrich the ornithological branch of natural history.

I arrived outside the tent, gently raised the hammers of my gun, but still the mysterious bird flew not away—its cry continuing to echo from the same spot, louder, if possible, than before. Pointing the muzzle of my weapon between the "fly" and the tent, in the direction of the noise, I stood all ready to pull the trigger; but, before doing so, naturally waited to see the fated object. I looked and looked, peered and peered between the canvas, yet, in spite of the brilliant moonlight, and although the strange wild cry continued sounding within a few paces, not a feather could I spy, not a thing could I discern! The situation became appalling. There was—not *that*, for "that" must be pretty tangible,—but there was a thing, a something, a spectre fowl, yelling its hideous yells at the respectable recorder thereof. I began to believe in ghosts, spirits, apparitions, *et hoc genus omne;* began to think and speculate as to the wonders of Kaffir "tagarti," or sorcery. Then I gazed again. Something surely moved this time. What could it be? Nothing very dangerous, that was evident, for the moving object was so small that I could scarcely see it, though only at the other end of the tent. I felt certain all the wild wailing noise of that strange weird cry really proceeded from this

insignificantly small thing. Laying down the gun, I took my cap in hand, crept to the spot, made a grab, and secured the unknown intruder within it.

After re-entering the tent, and striking a light, I carefully examined the noisy little disturber of my midnight dreams; finding it to be an insect about three inches long, of a bright green colour, closely resembling the grasshopper species, and with a patch of hard rough skin on either side, upon which the grating of a file-like projection on the inner side of each of its hind legs produced all that volume of sound! It was wonderful. The noise made by that little insect was as loud as the cry of the largest hawk. It is a variety of the *Mantis*.

Each day we rose with the sun, performed our cooling and refreshing ablutions in the Little Umgeni, and then set to work at breakfast of *damper*, eggs, rich mealie-meal porridge, with sweet fresh milk, and steaming aromatic coffee; our table the emerald turf, our canopy the pure ethereal blue of heaven. There was a rich, delightful pleasure in this sort of life, a deep-seated luxurious satisfaction in all this unsophisticated communing with Nature, which pen of mortal can but ill describe; it was a thing to be so utterly enjoyed, to be appreciated with so sensitive yet spiritually powerful an ardour, as to be beyond the feeble effort of description.

One of our party by turn remained in camp to see after the property, the two Kaffirs, and the preparation of dinner, a portion of which he was expected to furnish, in the shape of partridges, wild pigeons, or antelope, from the neighbouring bush. The rest of us, dividing into two parties, prospected the surrounding country, with knapsack and lunch on back, pick, spade, and pan in hand, for a considerable distance round about, returning at sunset to our camp and dinner.

In many places we succeeded in obtaining "the colour," or gold in very minute particles, but so trifling in quantity as to be quite unworthy of further attention. Nowhere could we find a richer spot than at the flat on which we were encamped, and that would never have yielded a shilling a day per man. Neither could we discover the slightest trace of any quartz-reefs, or matrix, from which the gold had been originally disintegrated; though we felt certain that such formations could not be far distant. This fact caused us to regard

the theory of gold being found in small quantity in some quartzose granites with rather more respect than we had hitherto experienced, for, of such rock, any quantity existed. To every stream within a radius of some fifteen miles did we travel day after day, awaking unwonted echoes from the solitary dells, and exciting the unqualified astonishment of the dingy natives with the loud sound of our Anglo-Saxon voices, and the louder noise of pick, pan, or "cradle," spade, crowbar, or blasting charge, as we splashed about in the waters, turned up the beds of the streams, or burrowed, like moles, into their banks and shores.

All this was terribly hard work; carrying tools, provisions, blankets, &c., over such broken, hilly country, through such dense jungle and long grass; besides sinking shafts and driving tunnels, up to the middle in water, sometimes lying on your side to labour, and picking your way through flinty conglomerate that struck fire at every blow; and all for nothing—not an ounce of gold resulting from our arduous toil. But then we were our own masters; there was, moreover, a singular charm and fascination about the perfectly free and independent nature of the life; and this it is, when joined to the excitement of finding gold, that makes so many men of every grade embrace and settle to the digger's lot.

As the inutility of our labour at this part of the country became apparent, we determined to "prospect" still further inland, leaving one of our party to watch the proceedings at the flat, in order to pick out a claim should the Government party prove it profitable when they began to "sluice," whilst the rest moved off with the tent and wagon. We drew lots for this, and as it fell to my fortune to remain, I proceeded to establish myself upon the summit of a small hill rising from the flat, so as to avoid the vapours always hanging over the lower ground at night. I was now left as camp-master, and built for myself, completing it in a few days, a small sod hut, with a thatched roof, a door in front, and a window, made of the sides and bottom of a wine case, at the back.

As our two Kaffirs were despatched with the waggon and oxen to a better grazing ground further inland, I was obliged to do the work alone, not being able to hire a native servant until after finishing the cabin.

Never shall I forget the hard labour that same domicile exacted. The worst part of all was the carrying of grass for thatch. In order to obtain this I had to cross the Umgeni, and ascend a range of hills on the other side. And then the toil of carrying, slung to each end of a pole, up hill and down dale, right to the summit of the airy position I had chosen, two huge bundles of long and heavy grass. And this through the broiling heat of an unusually hot tropical summer, when the sun's burning rays became intensified by the bare shining rock and thick dense bush around. Many a time did I throw myself to the ground, thoroughly exhausted, whilst converted into a cart-horse with such a load of that confounded thatch. It was all very well for De Foe to make a romance out of Robinson Crusoe's adventures, but just let any one try to realise that sort of thing by personal experience, especially in the way of building a hut unassisted, and I think that it will very likely knock all the romance out of his head. However, work I was obliged to; it was too late any repining now. I had chosen to visit Africa in search of Ophir, and if I wanted shelter from the winds and rains of Heaven there was no resource but to make it.

Like other sublunary affairs, my building came to an end at last. Then, as I stood off to gaze upon and admire the production of my diligence, I could not but feel an inward hope that it might prove more useful than it appeared ornamental. Nature never intended me for an architect or builder—*that* was evident. I thought of the famous rebuke the celebrated actor had received when he would have discovered the authorship of the "Letters of Junius," and felt that I also had, in one case at least, mistaken my vocation.

Just at that very moment, when the last touch had been given to the wonderful-looking roof, and the reader's humble servant stood gazing upon his handiwork in much the same frame of mind as did, no doubt, the celebrated Dr. Faustus glare with horror on his monster-man or man-monster, up came one of the Mission-station Kaffirs, dressed in ancient hat, shirt, and trousers, speaking a little English, and seeking employment. The rogue! I felt perfectly convinced that he had purposely kept away until all the hard work was over, and the hut finished. Nevertheless, I gladly engaged him to perform the rather multifarious duties of cook, butler, steward, footman, and

valet combined, at the not extravagant salary of ten shillings a month and *scoff*—meaning mealie-meal and whatever other food I might feel inclined to give him.

My sable Ganymede rejoiced in the Britannic cognomen of "Tom." He possessed distinctive and peculiar features. He had the pleasure of being wall-eyed, and whilst the upper part of his expansive physiognomy invariably presented an inscrutable, sphinx-like expression, the mouth and lower part was nearly always distended at a broad grin. If this personality was neither beautiful nor elegant, it was at least eccentric and peculiar.

Having engaged him on the spot, he at once began his duties, and had just assisted me to carry up the first article from our tent—it was a box—and place it inside our new abode, when, lo! I formed my first acquaintance with the serpents of Natal.

Standing with my foot against one end of the box, in a corner of the hut, I was proceeding to unfasten its lashing, when I felt something cold moving over that foot and leg, boots and stockings being cast aside in that retired and broiling locality. I did not at first take any notice of this, thinking that it was the wet rope; but when the end came to my hand, and still that cold, crawling sensation remained, a sudden fear flashed across my mind, I looked down, and there was a hideous long snake, twisting and contorting itself, and just on the point of twining itself round my bare leg!

"Wal, strangers," as the "long Yankee" afterwards related to an admiring audience, "I was not long in gittin up to git. I became volant. Threw out that limb considerable; through the doorway like a streak of greased lightning; and, strangers, first I walked, and then I ran, and at last I ran so fast that, turning the corners, my coat-tail cracked like a whip, and stood out so stiff that you might have stood a silver dollar on the end of it!"

Thomas had absquatulated. Had he "sunk in the earth, or vanished in air," I knew not; but there, half-way up the hill, stood my comrade Will, holding his long sides, and roaring with laughter at my startling capers.

However, quickly returning with a tremendous bludgeon, the biggest I could get, nearly the whole of a young bush tree, I did incontinently wage war upon that wretched sibileating reptile. I knew not whether I was safe or

bitten, for I felt "pretty considerably kinder riled," as my wondering comrade afterwards forcibly expressed it, and had not either time or coolness to ascertain just then; for there, sure enough, with his flat and diamond-shaped head projecting from beneath the box—which was raised off the ground on a couple of chocks—his bright and glittering bead-like eyes fixed on mine, as I peered within the hut, laid that type of man's enemy in general, and the personification of it to me in particular.

I made a grab, seized the box by its lashing and swung it outside, and then, as the snake went crawling along the ground towards the far end of the hut, I brought my bludgeon down upon his back with a mighty thwack. I had not then by experience realised the fact that a thin strong switch will disable any ordinary-sized snake much more readily than a stout stick, for it will dislocate the vertebræ where a thick weapon only bruises.

My victim hardly made an effort to fight for his life; but, nevertheless, as it took several swinging blows to bring him under subjection, I made quite sure of victory by hammering away for nearly half-an-hour—to the huge delight of the "long Yankee," who stood gazing through the doorway, until nothing was left but snake-jelly.

By this time my faithful servitor had re-appeared, his ebon visage still, however, of a pale, unhealthy blue—the colour niggers turn with fear—and no sooner did he see the dead reptile than he cried—

"Oh, master! Wow! Ma-me! No good. Miningi skellem, leh inyoka!" Meaning—translated from the mixture of Kaffir and Low Dutch in which he expressed himself—"the snake was plenty bad." In other words, very poisonous.

After the departure of my comrades inland, the life which I led for some weeks might have pleased some hermit of the hill; but I found it necessary to be as active as possible, otherwise the monotonous sameness of the scenery, the interminable succession of similar sized hills, covered with the same dense low bush, would assuredly have given me a fit of the most melancholic megrims, after the glorious landscapes to which I had been accustomed in the East. Had it not been for the wildness in the aspect of the country, and the fact that by exploring amongst the boulders, cliffs, sands, and rank vegetation of

the streams, I came upon the only picturesque or romantic spots, I could not have remained alone at the Umtwalumi.

What with "prospecting" for gold, hunting, seeing how the diggers were getting on, and visiting the neighbouring native *kraals* or villages, I found plenty of occupation.

Every morning, just after sunrise, I descended, like Robinson Crusoe, from my castle. Unlike that celebrated castaway, I went to mingle with my fellow men by joining some of the Government party in a bathe. At a short distance in front of their tent the Little Umgeni spread out so as to form a wide and charming pool off the end of the flat, round which it took a sharp bend before joining the Umtwalumi. This was our favourite bathing place. A plunge into the cold still water, here twelve or fourteen feet deep, was no small luxury in the middle of an African summer. It is true there existed one rather trifling drawback to the pleasures of natation.

The very first morning that I dived into the pool my outstretched hands struck against some roughish sort of substance near the bottom. It started away. With a violent movement of horror I struggled back in the water, struck out with all my strength, and reached the surface in a profuse perspiration just in time to see a young alligator crawling out at the other side of the pool!

Vainly we ever after strove to encounter and try a little rifle-practice at the expense of that amiable young saurian who had so politely made way for his unexpected guest, being, no doubt, equally as much astonished and alarmed as the latter. We never saw him again. Peace be to him! He did not prove bad-mannered by coming to take a limb that could ill be spared. Long ere this, in all probability, he has returned to his accustomed haunt, there to lead a life of quiet and repose in the stilly depths of that now deserted pool. Strange that memory, in after years, should "still bring back the feeling"—in this case the sensation that passed between several Anglo-Saxons on the one part and a stout young alligator on the other. I often think of him; I wonder if he ever remembers me, and regrets—now that his jaws have grown stronger, and he, perhaps, gets tired of stray dogs, buck, and little fishes—that he did not try the flavour of the strange white flesh.

I cannot deny that our acquaintance caused me some uneasiness—a sort of nervous dread and horror, like one feels in swimming a match against that unquiet demon of the deep, the shark. For many mornings after the rencontre not a member of our swimming party would enter that pool, either first or alone. But after throwing in a few huge stones, to tickle and drive away our scaly friend, should he perchance be lurking at the bottom again, we would all plunge in together, for it would have taken something more than alligators to do us out of that delicious cold bath. And then one gets so brave in company, especially when some other fellow's leg may be taken off first.

It was in the bank by the edge of this pool where gold had first been found. The auriferous locality was an alluvial flat of some twelve acres, and along the river-edge of this "drift" or alluvium a thickness of from six to eight feet of "wash" lay exposed, resting on a bed of greatly decomposed blue granite or talcose rock. This "wash dirt" resembled the "deep placer" of California, though it was not nearly so considerable, and consisted of regular layers of various crystalline and metamorphic stones and boulders, water-worn and rounded, the lowest tier containing the heaviest masses, beneath and amongst which laid the gold. The whole mass was evidently of very ancient deposit, and was firmly cemented together with salts of iron, carbonate of lime, and amorphous silica. We had tried this flat in many places, always finding gold on the bed-rock, but only in water-worn specks, so few and far between, and yet distributed with so unvarying a regularity as to forbid all hope of any richer patches. We soon concluded that the Government party would make a *fiasco* of their plan, and that the place could not be made to pay for more than salt by even the most extensive process of working.

Another fact that damped our hope of finding richer auriferous deposits elsewhere, was the unpromising aspect of the country at any distance from that part, where the course of the Umtwalumi lies through very broken and rugged ground, presenting greater evidence of igneous action and upheaval than any of the adjacent districts. All the indications one could wish for, all the signs of an auriferous country were present—everything, in fact, was there but the gold itself.



POOL ON THE LITTLE UMGENI RIVULET.

During the absence of my companions, I managed to amuse myself pretty well, although there was no one amongst the diggers of whom I could make either a friend or an associate. I lived pretty well, also, if not regularly. A few hours' hunting in the bush would generally procure either several large partridges, some delicious wild pigeons, or a buck. Nearer to Durban, however, game was scarce. We found that the leopard, wolf, and wild boar still inhabited the jungles and mountain fastnesses of Natal, though most of the larger wild animals have long since taken their departure for "fresh fields and pastures new."

The Little Umgeni and other rivers of the colony contain immense eels, and I have seen some of the diggers catch them five feet long, and nearly as thick as a man's leg. I did not care for that sort of food myself, retaining, perhaps, too vivid a recollection of having passed those houses labelled "eel-pie," and reeking with a hot, nauseating steam, in the streets of London. However, with pins and twine, I used to catch dozens of little scale-fish, from three to six inches long, though they were awfully full of bones, and there were not any larger.

As for beef and mutton, those were luxuries not to be obtained in Natal outside its towns and villages, unless, indeed, one happened to be on good terms with the natives, or paid a visit to the *kraal* of some hoary old Kaffir reprobate, when he gave a "jwarlar" or beer-drinking to his dingy and dirty compatriots, and killed a fatted ox, either for that bibacious feast, or to celebrate the marriage dancing and festivities upon the sale of a daughter. However, plenty of fowls were to be bought at from threepence to sixpence each, and there seemed no end of mealies. This latter article is a very fine and white variety of maize, and, for the sake of the poor, is well worth being introduced in England. It is very cheap—six to nine shillings per *muid* of 180lbs.—very nourishing, and very savoury, besides being a good bread-stuff, and could be imported at slight expense.

I was out prospecting one day, about seven miles further up the Umtwalumi than my dwelling-place, and was climbing up near the summit of a very rugged and unfrequented mountain, in order to view the surrounding country from that elevated position, when I suddenly encoun-

tered a huge greyish white wolf, amongst a confused heap of large rocks and boulders, which were partially overgrown with high brushwood.

As I had only a revolver and Tom to depend on, I did not feel excessively pugnacious. In the twinkling of an eye Master Thomas left me to my own devices and the tender mercies of that unamiable-looking brute —who, I could not help suspecting, might be troubled with carnivorous tendencies—and I heard the bushes cracking under his precipitate descent hundreds of yards below. He was a terrible coward, that Tom ; but then he was a good cook. However, just at that moment I did not so much appreciate his culinary accomplishments, when I stood in danger of myself becoming an uncooked meal without either salt or grace. I would have preferred a bad cook and a good warrior just then, as there we stood, that gaunt, hungry-looking wolf and I, facing each other at a distance of only a wretched five yards or so. I dared not fire, for I could not depend upon the accuracy of my revolver, and knew that if I missed placing him *hors de combat* at the first shot, he would not, in return, be obliging enough to miss me. I would have wished him good day, as my boy had done, but that did not seem a very dignified proceeding ; and, besides, Mister Wolf might have taken it into his head to jump upon my back. So I just kept my eyes fixed on his, which were restless, and glowing like live coals, and threw into my air all that I could of the majesty of man. This, I flatter myself, exercised its due effect. The overawed brute suddenly swerved off, made a spring over one of the boulders, and vanished from my Jove-like gaze for ever. I think that he was very aged, and may have been harmless, but he looked unpleasant—very. Thomas joined me at the bottom of the hill, but even an untold number of oxen would never have induced him to ascend it again.

A few days after this, whilst out shooting *ipete*, a very small species of blue antelope peculiar to the coast district, I saw my first South African wild boar. Having wormed my way into the heart of a patch of the dense jungle, I had ensconced myself above a little hollow, which, being comparatively clear, formed a "run" for the wild animals. After waiting for a long time in vain, I was getting tired and unwary, when a small *ipete* suddenly

dashed across the opening, and I missed with both barrels. The smoke was yet wreathing from the muzzle of my gun, when a tremendous crashing resounded in the bush above me, and the next instant an immense wild boar rushed past in the "run." The brute was simply enormous, and must have been at least a five hundred pounder. Long bristles seemed to stand erect along his black and arching back, and I saw the fiery twinkle of his red little eyes, the gleam of formidable white tusks, a full six inches long, as he crashed along, with his head lowered near the ground. The monster must have seen me, but I fancy that most likely never having heard the report of a gun before, it had so startled him that he was far too frightened to attack me. Gordon Cumming may be right enough, and so may Jules Gerard, and there is not any accounting for taste; for my part, however, I have not the slightest wish to become so great a Nimrod, so wonderful an author. It may not be heroic, but I did feel satisfied at the discreet conduct of that bristly brute; besides, I had not even gun-flints with which to fight it, like Baron Munchausen did in his celebrated encounter, when he had not time to re-load his weapon.

CHAPTER IV.

Horizontal Human Sign-posts—Unpleasantly involved in Bridal Ceremonies *à la Kaffir*—A Grand Umjardu—Undress of the Dancers—The Bride—The Old Fugleman—Repulsive Incident—Uncleanliness of Natives—Turn Doctor: Its Unpleasant Consequences—Native Converts—A Gigantic and too susceptible Inamorato—A War Dance by Kaffir Warriors at Night—The Bride's Unyielding Modesty, and a Curious Marriage Custom.

THE principal if not only amusement of the natives I found to be their Terpsichorean entertainments. One day, at the Umtwalumi, I and my sable Ganymede took our way to a neighbouring *kraal*, where high festival was being held upon the occasion of the sale or marriage of one of its head-man's daughters.

Long before reaching the collection of beehive-shaped huts forming the village, we became convinced of its vicinity, and satisfied that we were on the right road, by passing stray guests helplessly deposited here and there amongst the tall rank grass, utterly borne down and overcome by *jwarlar*, a native beer made of maize. As we approached nearer, these horizontal sign-posts became more numerous, and their attitudes appeared more utterly abandoned and erratic; they had not been able to retreat so far as the others for repose. The road to that village really presented the aspect of a stricken field, without the gore. There lay the victims, in every conceivable position, just as they had rolled to mother earth; and whilst some of them were holding on to the grass to keep themselves from falling, others might be seen fondly embracing the trunks of trees beyond which they could not pass, and which refused to move out of their way.

At last a cloud of dust, the humming noise of many voices, the hollow beating sound of a prodigious stamping, and, above all, an overwhelming odour—for we were to the leeward of the *kraal*—ushered us into the midst of the festivities. As we came by a back way our arrival was not seen, and it took place at a rather inauspicious moment, for we rushed out—eagerly, on my part, to get to the windward of the palpable aroma proceeding from my

major-domo's hot, perspiring countrymen—into the centre of the large open space before the village, just as two considerable bodies of braves met there in mid-shock of a wild, ferocious, and outlandish ovation to the shrine of Hymen, *à la Kaffir.* It gave one a pleasant sensation as to what their hostility would be like, the being suddenly converted into a sort of central focus round about which those nearly nude, black, and savage-looking warriors gyrated, danced, and executed their barbaric evolutions; the keen blades of their gleaming *assegais* darting to within an inch or so of your vital parts, and their ponderous *knobkerries* whirling within the veriest proximity of your temples.

Being at length left alone by the sudden separation of the opposite ranks, right eagerly I availed myself of the opportunity to get to windward and breathe a breath of fresh air. As I had endured the club and spear ordeal as became a warrior, and had preserved a sufficiently becoming air of utter indifference to deadly weapons dashed within a hair's-breadth of my carcass, the venerable head man of the *kraal* deigned to afford me a rather flattering reception; brought forth *jwarlar* and *shimyan*—a most powerful ardent spirit, made from Kaffir corn, and which would kill further off than even colonial rum—and stationed me beside his own hut, where I could obtain a capital view of the proceedings.

A large semicircle was now forming of more than one hundred individuals, composed of alternate braves and young women; the whole being led by an ancient fugleman, who danced along in front of the concave line, and by two stalwart young men who were at each end of the array. The principal leader kept time and led the dance with a long white wand or bâton of office. Holding this in his right hand by one end, he slowly raised it aloft, with a singular, undulating, serpentine motion; then lifted his open left hand, made the first step, and the extraordinary Terpsichorean exercise began. Watching him, and keeping time by his wand, the whole line commenced with a solemn adagio sort of movement; stamping with all their strength upon the ground, first with one foot and then the other, and at the same time bending, twisting, and wriggling every part of their bodies, every nerve and muscle being brought into violent play in an indescribably peculiar manner.

Then, bent nearly double, the end leaders would hop forward on both feet together, execute, in perfect time, a series of most wonderful contortions, and then hop back to the line, giving place to their immediate neighbours, who in turn were succeeded by others, until every member of the dance had shown off his or her grand *pas*. The most perfect silence was maintained during this performance by every actor in it, and the only sound to be heard was the regular loud beat of the tremendous stamping, mingled with the occasional applauding shouts of the spectators.


THE BRIDE.

The exciting although monotonous aspect and effect of that strangely automatic and accurately regular-timed dance was very forcible indeed, so that one could not help beating time to it. There was also considerable scenic effect in those excited dusky forms, with their waving plumes, rolling eyes, bead-bedizened ebony limbs, tossing tufts of ornamental horse-hair, fantastic evolutions, brandished shields, and *assegais*.

The dress of the dancers was scarcely more than a feather stuck in their wool—the girls, in addition, wearing only a little embroidered apron, a necklace of glass beads, earrings and bracelets of the same, with bangles of brass on legs and arms; some few had also a small piece of embroidered hide hanging before the bosom, and this constituted the full dress costume—quite *comme il faut*—of a Kaffir belle. The chief's daughter, and a few other girls who only looked on, wore ancient blankets thrown over their shoulders. The bride was

young, rather pretty—in the childlike, pouting style—and had intelligent features, with a very projecting forehead. She was slighter and more graceful in figure than the generality of Kaffir girls, but then, as a chief's daughter, she had probably been exempted from the hard field labours of the ordinary African female's lot. She had rather expressive eyes, splendid white teeth. and wore her hair in its natural short crisp ringlets, frizzed all over her head, The bridegroom was a great, awkward, hulking lump of a fellow, who had been servant to a merchant in Durban, and who had somehow managed to save enough money with which to buy thirty oxen, the price he paid for his better half. He seemed to be far more timid and bashful than did the vivacious dusky little bride.

The warriors wore nothing but *moutchas,* or small aprons of sheep's tails, hide, or feathers, bangles on the legs and arms, with sometimes tufts of white horsehair round the knees, ankles, and elbows, with a long plume of feathers stuck into their elaborately curled, greased, and moulded wool, made and plastered into wonderful shapes; the inseparable *assegais,* shields of bull-hide and ellipsis shape, and massy *knobkerries,* completed their equipment. Many of them were painted on the face with designs of leaves, flowers, or geometrical lines.

I must not neglect to bestow a word of praise on that aged fugleman, who acquitted himself in a way that would have procured him the undying envy of any but very philosophical French professors of the light fantastic toe. Such vaults, demi-vaults, pirouettes! such striking attitudes! such inimitable antic tricks and wonderful gesticulations! I never saw anything to equal his performance. He must have been at the least fifty-five years of age, was covered with honourable scars, having served as a warrior under the celebrated Charka, that terrible Zulu conqueror, and was much respected by all the natives. Age had not yet impaired the vigour of his sinewy frame and iron muscles, as his unequalled leading of that fearfully laborious gymnastic exercise proved. The wand with which he kept the time to a mathematical accuracy was itself so dexterously handled as to seem almost a living thing.

All the performances I witnessed were termed *umjardu,* or marriage

dances, and were all well worth seeing. However, there was one part of the play against which I feel entitled to enter an unqualified protest. All the old crones and elder women, no very charming figures, instead of acting as orderly observers, occupied themselves by running backwards and forwards in front of the dancers, bending down in a waddling sort of gait, and uttering absurd cries, in imitation of hens, whilst their long and flabby bosoms went flapping from side to side in a most unsightly manner.

Another thing that offended the chronicler morally, and materially disagreed with his olfactory sense, was the general uncleanliness of the assembled natives, the filthy condition of the few blankets and the scanty articles of clothing amongst them, and the grimy, unwashed condition of their skins. These were circumstances which, combined with the hot, steaming condition of their bodies under that fierce sun, produced an abominable effluvium ; and I here take the liberty of giving my indulgent readers this piece of advice, whenever you go to a Kaffir dance, take care you get to windward.

The day was broiling hot, and the fierce rays of the fiery sun fell full upon the circular open space which formed the dancing-place of the village, and was the summit of the flat hill on which it was built. So the heat, together with the violent exercise and excitement of the crowded guests, made many of them ill. One young fellow fell down in some sort of a fit, and as the stupid niggers thronged around him in a way that threatened suffocation as he laid among their feet, I took upon myself the responsibility of attending to him. Ordering them all away except two, who carried him to a cool spot beneath a corn-shed raised high above the ground, I promptly drenched him with jarfuls of cold water, keeping the same applied to his spine and head. He soon recovered sufficiently to walk with a little assistance; and then the saalaming I received, the reverent regard, the awful respect with which the admiring concourse of Africans saluted me as "Kulu kakulu docteler" (the very great doctor)!

Their awe for the white man's *targarti** at once procured me the free entrée to every hut within the *kraal*, and those who succeeded in getting me inside their very plain and primitive habitations—mere thatched huts, round,

* Sorcery or magic.

and with a little hole, like a bee-hive, by way of door and windows, and a floor of earth—seemed only too delighted at the honour done them. It was really amusing to see the eager earnestness with which they would drive out small naked children, and anxiously whisper the grown people to make room for the "umlungo inkosi" (white chief), the great white doctor. Alas! this honour was dearly bought, for, ever after, during the remainder of my sojourn at the River Umtwalumi, the people far and near received the good tidings, and acted upon it by bringing to my door their aged sick—victims to nothing but their load of years—and dirty little negro children, troubled with sores and skin diseases, whose principal want was plenty of soap and water. The nuisance became almost intolerable, but I did not escape it until leaving the locality, for I am one of those who believe in treating what we choose to term the inferior races kindly, justly, and with respect. Some of them rather like it. I think these Kaffirs did; at least, they christened me "Tandelar" (the beloved), a name which clung to me during all my stay in Africa.

I was joined at this grand *umjardu* by my friend Roger, who had just returned with his companion, Louis, from prospecting; but the latter preferred remaining at my hut and turning into the hammock I had rigged up there, being footsore and weary, and, as he expressed it, not having "shleept indo der ped fur more den tree veeks."

Shortly after Roger rejoined me some of the Christian converts arrived from the mission station to share in the festivities. There were two lots of them, a party of men, who, in their shabby European garb, compared very disadvantageously with the naked, picturesque warriors, in their heathen state; and a group of women, clad in gowns—crinoline and all—with their woolly hair pulled out as straight as possible, and, ye gods! stuck, with a young chignon, into a net. How had fashion penetrated to the wilderness! Although some of these women were by no means bad-looking for their race, yet, as all had been married some few years, the field-labour had impaired figures which, even when of the finest shape amongst them, are yet so hugely developed in the bosom—and their movements are generally so heavy, the breadth of their hips so immense—as never to look graceful in the tight bodice and the long skirt of Europe.

Although these evangelised Sambos seemed inclined to be patronising and friendly to us, I cannot say that we were favourably impressed either by their physical or moral appearance. I could not help thinking that cunning, deceit, and hypocrisy seemed legible in their countenances. I am sorry to say that further experience only confirmed us in the opinion that, in many cases, they had acquired the vices of the white man as well as some vague notion of his theology. By far the majority of Europeans in Natal prefer to have the unchristianised savages as servants and labourers.

That day, at the *umjardu*, one of the crinoline and chignon arrayed damsels, and who must have weighed at least two hundred and fifty pounds, took it into her head to show unequivocal symptoms of regard unto the writer. Whether or not under the potent influence of *jwarlar* I cannot tell, but I do know that she followed me about like my shadow. Wherever I sat there came she; whithersoever I went there followed that sable Venus on a large scale. Never shall I forget the huge amusement that too susceptible and prodigious Kaffiress afforded. Now she ogled with her little oblique eyes, trying to look languishing and killing; now her mighty bosom rose and fell, heaved and subsided, like the ocean after a storm, when she sighed such frequent sighs to breathe her love, to show her tenderness, and, by its melting influence, subdue this stony heart. Getting bolder, and seizing a favourable opportunity, she softly whispered to me that her husband was absent on a journey. Here was news with a vengeance! I was to be involved in an intrigue, *nolens volens*, with that immense, that formidable negress. Surely, the missionary who converted her cannot have instructed her as to the pains and penalties of our civilised divorce courts. Whilst reflecting upon this, that dusky inamorato probably mistook my silence for consent to her hasty suit, for she grabbed one of my hands between her powerful paws, turned up the sleeve, and, stroking my arm very tenderly, like an old maid smoothing down her kitten, murmured, in broken English—

"Oh, Mar-me! Very mushlee" (nice) "arm; very mushlee skin. You very too much mushleee umuntu" (man).

It was beyond endurance. Unable to restrain his mirth any longer, Roger burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which I joined him,

after, with a desperate effort, having torn away my hand. We left that exaggerated sable Venus in confusion, tears, and disappointment; a prey to her agonised and outraged feelings, and with an expression of countenance fully expressing the idea that "love forsaken 's a tormenting pain."

I heard of this charming damsel again, for it seemed that her affections were not to be so easily blighted, nor her will so easily thwarted. A few days later she came and fairly laid siege to my hut and heart, when, fortunately, her dingy lord and master having discovered her whereabouts, arrived, with a big stick, to take her home; and as she meekly followed him away over the hills, I could hear the sounding thwacks of the aforesaid big stick resounding from her massive shoulders. Yet, although huge and ponderous enough to have made a trifling meal of her comparatively diminutive spouse, she bore the flagellation with remarkable resignation.

"Wow! Umfarzi ga mina" (wife of mine), "na! na! na!" howled the little darkie, dancing around his better four-fifths, and accompanying each expletive with a blow of his stick, as they went off through the bush.

"Wow! Mar-me!" were the only exclamations his good lady uttered, in a tone of slight surprise, and shrugging her mighty shoulders as though something tickled them.

Any vanity I might have felt as to my personal charms in the eyes of the Kaffir fair was most effectually dispersed when I subsequently heard that she had previously carried off and eloped with a certain young Israelitish photographer who had once wandered to these parts. However, she was not worse than her little husband, who had himself twice run off with other men's wives from the mission station.

When it became quite dark, the *umjardu* concluded with a war-dance, in which only the approved warriors took part. Nearly all their ornaments were laid aside, and with scarcely other covering than a piece of some red or gaudy coloured cloth around their heads, the nude and swarthy warriors formed themselves into a dense circle, led by a hideous, gigantic Zulu brave. Heated and half intoxicated with *shimyan* and *jwarlar*, their stamping and

gestures were furious; their grinning and formidable white teeth glistened the while; their cruel black eyes rolled and flashed with seeming fury. It was a hideous, almost demoniacal, hurly-burly. The young men and women kept apart, but all the old and ugly hags from that and neighbouring *kraals* kept either running round the circle carrying flaming torches, or making a harsh, crashing noise, like the breaking of bones, by striking together flat pieces of wood; and all of them joined in pouring forth the most horridly awful and dissonant shrieks. The small boys helped them, too, in this, and in rushing frantically round the warriors. Meanwhile, the fiendish black figures in the centre sprang and whirled about in seeming wildest fury, yet, withal, stamped and dashed their feet upon the ground, horridly contorted their bodies, and vociferated such appalling yells—and all so accurately together, in such perfect time—as to seem quite supernatural, and prove awfully oppressive with its strange, weird, unearthly savagery.

These benighted Kaffirs had neither religious ideas nor forms of theology at all. There was not any ceremony of marriage beyond the drinking, eating, and dancing, unless, indeed, the following peculiar custom could be termed such.

After the bridegroom's friends had handed over the last of the thirty oxen to the bride's father, the sable Benedict proceeded to the hut prepared for the espousals, in order to take possession of his property. Here, however, came the difficulty. The now bashful maiden steadily refused submission. Kisses, tears, protestations, and adoration, were—so we were told, for the principals were left alone—tried in vain. This would have been rather an awkward dilemma for a newly-married man in any civilised country; but the "noble savage" had a way of getting over it, so bore the inexorable prudishness of his maiden wife very philosophically, came away from her, and sent in his female relatives to try their powers of persuasion.

I noticed that this bevy of aged females and sable damsels carried bundles of thin, lissome sticks, and felt rather surprised and curious as to what they were for. Not long, however, was I left in doubt, for soon sundry strange noises issued forth from the hut. There came the flaccid crackling



THE WAR DANCE.



KRAAL WHERE THE UMJARDU TOOK PLACE.

noise of a vigorous caning, accompanied by the subdued cries and exclamations of the victim. In the meanwhile, that undisturbed husband, knowing that he would soon be wanted, was squatted on the ground close by, enjoying a comfortable smoke of hemp leaves through a bullock's horn, with water at the bottom—a rough imitation of the hookah. After the caning had continued nearly half an hour the caners suddenly made their appearance, and loudly proclaimed that the obstinate bride had at last given in. Then the bridegroom left his pipe, crawled into the hut, fastened up the little hole that served for door, and the happy couple were left alone.

It is easy to understand how this custom might be mistaken for a barbarous system of forcing a young girl to marriage against her wish, and it is amusing to know that some few observers have been so misled. No

doubt, in isolated instances, the custom may be grossly abused; but, as a rule, and as in the present case, it is nearly always carried out *pro formâ*, and to fulfil Kaffir etiquette, for no young girl would be considered properly modest and respectable were she to receive her husband without being supposed to be compelled thereto by the canes of his female friends.

CHAPTER V.

A Presentiment, and an Adventure with a Puff-Adder—Auto-da-fé of Serpents—Roger's Confession—Carlotta—Love in the Wilderness—A "Lead" of Gold—Carlotta's Father has the Ophir Fever—I become Umtargarti—Louis Catches an Oribe, and makes a Discovery—Fight between the Amabaccas (*see Frontispiece*)—A Parley, and Explanation of the Hostilities—The Chief, Domise, and his Wife, Sharlular—Repulse of the Enemy.

SINGULARLY enough, that night, returning from the *umjardu*, I had a strong presentiment of danger, and it seemed to take the form of danger from snakes.

"I say, Roger," I cried to my companion, "I should not wonder if I get bitten by a snake to-night; I cannot get the thoughts of the reptiles out of my head."

"Whew! you don't say so! Look out then, old boy. You know that we have seen these presentiments, these vague ideas of impending danger, too frequently and rapidly verified out in China to laugh at them," he replied.

Rightly enough, too, for we had together witnessed out in that far Eastern land, several strange and fatal verifications of these mysterious secret sympathies or warnings.

Upon reaching the gold "flat," we found that the rest of our companions had returned with the waggon, and were encamped again on the old spot; so Roger left me at the tent, and I ascended the hill to my aerial abode.

I could not find the matches, and was just on the point of turning into my hammock cot in the dark—had, in fact, just taken hold of my blanket to do so—when again that snake presentiment flashed strongly and suddenly across my mind. I was wise enough to heed its warning.

Searching about, I at last discovered the matches and obtained a light. I then hung my lantern to the roof, selected the best of the formidable snake-sticks I always kept in imposing array at the head of my cot, and whisked off the blanket, when out fell, in black and yellow folds, the largest member of

the hideous puff-adder tribe it ever was my lot to meet. What a miraculous escape it was! Just fancy my fate had I tumbled in beneath the blanket, as I was just upon the point of doing! There is scarcely any more venomous sort of serpent than the puff-adder; and this brute was found to measure three feet nine inches in length, with poison fangs exactly one inch and three-eighths long, and a circumference, at the thickest part of its body, of just seven inches!

When the snake fell to the ground I dealt it a heavy blow, and as it raised itself up to spring at me, with a quick turn of the wrist, gave it another which knocked it off towards the door, and nearly disabled it. However, it succeeded in getting outside, and very nearly made its escape, for it was not until the level surface round my hut was passed, and the revolting reptile had almost reached the tall, uncut grass, that I succeeded in finally placing it *hors de combat* with a broken spine.

"Wal," said the "long Yankee" at sunrise in the morning, when he came to salute me, and saw the dead snake hanging at the door; "guess you keep a strange kind of company here. Hev you any more inside? Because, if you hev, I'm not in any hurry; I kin wait until they've gone."

"Come in, old fellow, come in," said I. "I don't think there are any crawling strangers about just now; though, as a rule, I find snakes inside, snakes outside, and snakes everywhere around this delightful dwelling. The top of this hill is nothing more nor less than a regular snake-nest. That wretch on the doorpost is the seventh I've killed inside the hut since you've been away."

"Whew! Jehoshaphat!" cried Will. "Talk of Virginny after that! Wal, skedaddle. Clear out of it before you become snake meat. We'll set the niggers to carry all the things back to the waggon after breakfast; then, tell you what—bright idea—we'll leave the hut to the snakes until we leave the Umtwalumi, and then make a slight sensation amongst them—have a little roast, set it alight, warm them up! They're sure to make the place a snake-hive when it's abandoned."

This programme was eventually carried out. I returned to the tent, and when, two weeks later, we left that part, we set the hut on fire, having the

grim satisfaction to do to death in the flames no fewer than one puff-adder, two voosamanzis, a black snake of which we did not know the name, and several large broods of young ones; for, sure enough, the detestable things had been making their nests in the crevices of the sod walls.

During our first breakfast together after the return of my comrades, I noticed that Roger kept giving me furtive glances, and looking as though he had something of importance to say. I knew him well, and could tell in a moment that he was anxious yet half-doubtful to entrust some secret to my confidence. It now occurred to me, too, that during the time he was with me at the Kaffir marriage he had shown symptoms of a similar sort, though the *umjardu* business had monopolised my attention.

When the meal was over, I went up the hill to superintend the removal of the goods and chattels by our sable servitors. Roger followed me in a short time, and, after a good deal of hesitation and beating around the bush, at length said :—

"Gus, old boy, I want to speak to you."

"Why, you *are* speaking to me, and have been doing so for the last ten minutes," I replied, jestingly, and pretending to be unconscious of his meaning; for I could divine that nothing very serious or important was the matter, though, whatever it might be, it certainly seemed embarrassing.

"Come along," continued my dear old chum, taking me by the arm, and pulling me away from the Kaffirs. "Let us walk down to the river. We'll be out of the way there, and then I'll tell you."

"Tell me! Tell me what? Who's murdered? Have you been and gone and killed any stray nigger?" I asked, continuing to rally him.

But he would not say anything until we came to a secluded little bend of the Umgeni, and then, as we were comfortably seated on some glassy granite boulders rising from the clear, shallow, tinkling stream, and partially sheltered from the warm rays of the forenoon sun by the bush trees standing out from the shelving bank behind us, he made the following revelation :—

"Well, Gus, old friend, I'm in love at last."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared I, interrupting him. "In love for the twentieth or twenty-first time! What with now? A fair, or, rather, dusky Kaffiress?

weighing only a few hundreds. Did you ever read 'Salmagundi?' You'll have to wheel her home in a wheelbarrow. Ha, ha, ha!" and I had a hearty laugh.

But Roger did not either join me or become impatient. Then I knew that he was in deep earnestness, so became sober—for I could not help feeling how grave a matter it would be if some sable savage damsel had really found serious favour in his eyes—and taking his hand, I said:

"Go on, Roger. I see that you are in earnest. I am listening, and have become a grave, if not a reverend or a potent seignior."

"Well," he began, "you heard us speaking of a Zwartkop farm and its owner, Mynheer van Mayer, but you did not hear any one speaking about his only daughter, Carlotta. Zwartkop is just across the Umzimkulu River, and so, beyond Natal. We made it our head-quarters for fourteen days, whilst prospecting in that neighbourhood. At the Drift Hotel, where you cross the river, on the road to Amapondo Land, we bought the five horses that we brought back with us, from a Griqua trader there. Leaving Will in charge of the tent and waggon, we were riding out the first day, when we came upon Zwartkop Farm, and I saw the beautiful Carlotta for the first time."

"Thank Heaven!" I exclaimed, interrupting him; "it is not a comely young negress, after all."

"The farm had only just been occupied," continued Roger, "and there was but a rude clay and wattle hut erected on it, but out of that humble abode came a being fit to adorn a palace. When we rode up, a lady came out to meet us—it was Carlotta. Apologising for the absence of her father and brother, who, she said, in pretty broken English, were at work looking after their stock, she begged us to alight and partake of some refreshment. Few travellers ever came that way, so the tea-kettle, which, *à la Chinois*, is always ready on the Natal colonist's fire, had to be prepared. In the meanwhile I had an opportunity to study the appearance of our fair hostess, while Louis talked to her in her native Dutch, for she was a daughter of one of the old Dutch colonists, whom British encroachments had driven, firstly from the old Cape Colony, and then from their later discovery and occupation of Natal.



THE MEETING WITH CARLOTTA.

"She was a beautiful young creature, old boy. Tall, majestic, and noble; lithe and graceful as a sylph of classic panegyric; and, perhaps, eighteen or nineteen years old. She was fair, lovely, and fascinating as Venus—a very goddess of love, doomed to waste her sweetness on this desert air! Her hair was tied up in rich heavy masses, of a golden hue, waving and sparkling like a rippling glory over her straight, regular features, and large, eloquent, blue eyes. Her ripe red lips only parted to expose such snow-white teeth! Her——"

"There, that will do, Roger. For gracious' sake do not enumerate such charms any further. You're caught, that's certain," I exclaimed; "but do not tempt a fellow like that. Remember, we are in the wilderness, and I should be sorry to become your rival."

"Ah, no fear of that, old friend! She has——"

"Why, you do not mean to say that you have confessed your love, and that it has been reciprocated already?" I interrupted him again.

"Well—yes—no—not exactly. That is to say, at least, she knows that I love her, and has—has—well, has admitted a preference—that I am not altogether indifferent to her."

"You see," he continued, in a palliative tone, "we saw a good deal of each other. In the evening, when we met her father, he was so kind and friendly; knew the neighbouring country so well, and, *con amore*, entered so heartily into our plans, and offered to show us about, that we out-spanned near his farm, and made it our head-quarters, from whence to prospect, during more than fourteen days. Fourteen days! Why I should have fallen in love with her in fourteen hours. She is just the girl that I have been looking for all my life! Beautiful, yet useful; handsome, yet diffident and unassuming; a lady, yet a thorough housewife. Where can you find her equal?"

Not knowing, I did not say; so he went on—

"I managed to remain behind pretty often, when the other fellows were all away prospecting for gold. I was prospecting for something better, far better than the yellow dross—a life, a soul, a wife!"

"Haw, haw, haw! I told you so," roared a rude stentorian voice, breaking in upon my chum's rhapsodies with a loud guffaw.

F 2

We looked up. It was the "long Yankee" addressing his brother.

"Told you so," he continued, not heeding my comrade's confusion; "'Rule Britannia' 's hooked by the little Dutch gal, just as sure as the United States are the most free and enlightened communities upon the whole surface of this round sublunary abode! Love in a cottage; a hut in the wilderness; a home with the flower of the prairie; bliss in a desert, and all that sort of thing. Haw, haw, haw!"

"Go it! Go ahead, old 'Stars and Stripes!' It amuses you, and it don't hurt me," said Roger, in a tone of chagrin, nevertheless.

"Rule Britannia" was the sobriquet the "long Yankee" had given my friend for his strong British patriotism, whilst the latter had retaliated with "Stars and Stripes" for his assailant's proclivities more American.

"Wal, never mind the little Dutch girl just now," continued Will. "You skulked enough when near her; come and work now. A nice fellow you are for a gold-digger. Here you are, romancing on the rocks, while I and Tom have been finding a lead of gold in this hungry 'placer.'"

In a short time we were all hard at work, making a drive under the flat, and following the lead, only, however, to find it terminated about ten feet in. Altogether we found it yield about eleven grains weight of gold. It was a regular trap, a beautiful crevice in the bed-rock, and would have been full of the precious metal had it existed in that locality in anything like paying quantity. After all, I came off the most successful at the Umtwalumi, for during the absence of my friends I had found the largest nugget ever obtained there—a wretched little speck weighing just two grains and a half, and which I yet wear as a trophy in a breast-pin!

Roger afterwards told me that Carlotta's father was also infected with the gold or Ophir fever, *auri sacra fames*, and had determined to start for the supposed site of that mythic place in the far interior, hoping either to go with us, or to join our party at the Tatin. It seemed that he had lost nearly all his stock of cattle during the previous year, at another farm, and this had nearly ruined him. The "lung sickness" had committed great havoc amongst the herds throughout Natal and the adjacent countries, and many once prosperous stock-farmers had been reduced from affluence to poverty. Roger

was now impatient for the inland trip, as Mynheer van Mayer only waited to dispose of his remaining stock and farm.

Very innocently, I became an object of considerable veneration to the native labourers in the Government party.

One morning several of these gentlemen, in a maliciously playful spirit, called me from where I was standing watching the progress of their ditch to come and look at something in a bush. I did so, saw a large hornet's nest, and knew that their little game was to get me to disturb the pugnacious insects, and then laugh at me for getting stung. I managed to outwit them effectively.

"Car saba leh!" (don't fear that) I exclaimed, making some mystic signs, muttering an unknown jargon, and calling upon them to witness my performance.

Curiosity—which the nigger can no more resist than can the monkey—overcame their prudence, and they kept drawing nearer and nearer. Then I threw a large stone into the nest; out flew the hornets in a crowd; the Kaffirs began to run, and, of course, were all severely stung; whilst I, by remaining perfectly still and motionless until the poisonous and vicious little insects had exhausted their animosity, escaped quite scathless. For this exploit, of which the simple secret was unknown to them, I received the sounding designation of an *umtargarti*, a sorcerer or fetish man. Dear me, how the poor devils did dance and caper about to be sure! Without shirts, without pantaloons, and with the whole swarm of active and infuriated hornets buzzing around and darting upon their naked carcases! They never tried to take me in again.

As the "sluicing" arrangements of the Government party were nearly ready, we went on a last prospecting trip before watching the result, and deciding whether to abandon the Umtwalumi diggings, or remain and work a claim.

This time we all went together, leaving the waggon out-spanned, but carrying behind our saddles sufficient provisions, &c., for a week or ten days, and went down coast.

Shortly after crossing the Umzimkulu River we came upon a herd of



MONSIEUR LOUIS' CHASE AFTER THE ORIBE.

oribes, or antelopes of the plain. Monsieur Louis, having wounded one, dashed off in pursuit of it on horseback, uttering loud yells, startling tally-ho's of the Swiss chase, and generally conducting himself in a wild and frantic, not to say insane, manner, until he vanished from our view in an adjacent thicket.

In a short time he re-appeared, bearing the oribe in triumph before him, but bleeding from a slight wound on the forehead, and spurring towards us in the most furious way, his hat hanging by its string, and his long Teutonic locks streaming in the breeze.

"Der mans!" he yelled, breathlessly, reining his steed upon its haunches, by our side. "Der mans, der Kaffiers kom! Kom on to der river, to der hill, till der mans go by. Kom on, quick!"

He was so evidently seriously alarmed that we crowded round for explanation.

"Wal, what do you mean, Dutchy? Take it easy, you can't say it all at once. What hev you seen to flurry yourself so much?"

"Der Kaffier army—soldiers, braves, vat you call him?—one, do hundred kom dis vay! I catch der puck, mien horse fall over him, I fall to der ground, I preak mien head, I get to mien legs, I see der Kaffiers marching dis vay und der bush, I get on mien horse, I pick up der puck, und I comes pack so quick ast I can. Dere! Kom quick!"

We were in "No Man's Land" now, and had heard that fighting was going on amongst the Kaffirs there, so that Louis' discovery was rather serious.

As the strange party was close upon us, and only hidden by the bush, I was too old a tactician to wait for so large, and, possibly, hostile a force in the open plain, so, putting spurs to my horse, I cried—

"Come along, boys. We'll cross the river again, and take up a position on the ridge at the other side, until we know what the movement means."

Then off we all scampered, the two Kaffirs on foot—we had left the driver alone in charge of the waggon and oxen—keeping up with us through fear.

We had not long to wait for proof of Monsieur Louis' discovery. Scarcely had we reined up upon a part of the ridge overlooking the river, than we heard a loud yelling burst forth upon the other side, mingled with occasional reports of fire-arms; and then a confused crowd of old men, women, and children appeared on the bank, plunged into the river, and began ascending a part of the ridge not far from where we were posted. The poor

creatures were struggling along, evidently footsore and weary, the young girls and women helping their elder relatives, and both aiding to drag along or carry the younger children. After them came a party of young men bearing along some wounded friends, and, right upon their heels followed a large body of armed warriors. These latter made a stand upon the point of land from which the fugitives had crossed to the other side, and round which the Umzimkulu made a sharp bend. The pursuers, a much larger body of Kaffir braves, from their similar dress and appearance seemingly of the same tribe, were so close upon them that it was evident nothing but a most determined stand and desperate defence of the ford could either cover the retreat of the non-combatants, or prevent the destruction of their gallant defenders.

Seeming to rally a body of his best and most stalwart men around him, the young chief in command of the defenders of the ford displayed great gallantry and extraordinary activity. Whilst most of his braves slowly retreated to positions on the further bank, he kept at bay every effort of the hostile force. Springing from point to point, wherever the fiercest attack was made, he passed unscathed through volleys of whizzing assegais and whirling stones, felling an enemy with every blow of his clubbed firelock, encouraging his staunch followers the while by his animating language and repeated war-cry no less than by his gallant actions.

Though assailed on both flanks and front, for their enemies plunged into the river and strove to effect a landing on either side of the point, his men repulsed every attack; and soon the clear waters of the Umzimkulu bore a more crimson tinge where, every here and there, the foe were either assegaied or brained with stones from the slings of the defenders.

The *mêlee* was something indescribable. Leaping and springing about like black fiends in torment, uttering the most appalling cries and ferocious yells, the combatants were swaying to and fro, here, there, and everywhere. They had not time to reload their few fire-arms, but used them to dash out each others' brains. There was nothing of the steady courage and decent murdering of your civilised or disciplined troops, but all the worst symptoms of individual ferocity and thirst of blood were awfully displayed. The poor wretch that once fell never rose again, for spears or assegais were thrust

through the wounded as they lay. No mercy was shown, no prisoners were made; indeed, in Kaffir warfare, nothing but the good-looking young women and the cattle are ever saved. The fight was principally maintained with assegais, which were darted by hand, and slings, for which a plentiful supply of hard jagged stones existed. We never met with any other Kaffir tribe that used this by no means contemptible weapon; it fully compensated for the almost entire absence of knobkerries, few of which were possessed by any of the combatants.

Having beaten back the first onset of their enemies, the defenders took advantage of the short respite by crossing over to the stronger position afforded by the ridge on which we had established ourselves. As we were each armed with a revolver and Snider breech-loading rifle, and had, besides, forty rounds of ammunition apiece, this proceeding did not cause us much anxiety; so we just stood upon our guard behind a few boulders, which formed a capital impromptu field-work, and awaited the result.

In a few moments, having seen our horses, or, perhaps, being anxious to secure the commanding position of our rocks, a party of some thirty warriors came towards us.

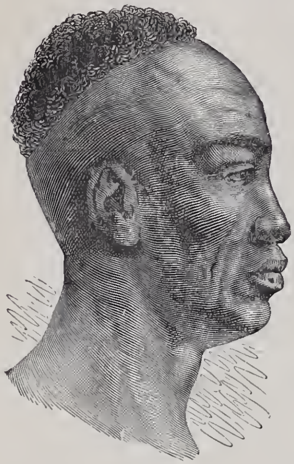
"Now then, boys, look out!" cried the "long Yankee." "I kinder guess we'll hev to drill some black leather yet."

However, stepping forward with my servitor—who had now become cook in general, and public property—the wretched Thomas, whose limbs were shaking in a perfect ague of fear, whose teeth chattered in a way that might have been heard nearly a mile off, and whose cheeks had become of a sickly leaden hue, I hailed the advancing braves, and demanded a parley or *indarba*, before they came any nearer.

The warriors halted, and, after a short consultation among themselves, a fine-looking middle-aged man stepped forth alone, and came towards us unarmed. Leaving my rifle behind, I advanced to meet him, having to drag the recreant Thomas with me by the ear, as I might require his services as interpreter, although by this time I had acquired a good deal of the Kaffir language.

The envoy—who wore a part of his head shaved according to the custom

of his tribe—informed me that he was Domise, Chief of the Amabaccas by hereditary right, and that he was fleeing to British soil for protection against his late assailants, that portion of the tribe which adhered to Tiba, his uncle; who, since the decease of his father, the late chief, had acted as regent, and had refused to recognise his right. Attempting to claim this, his people had been attacked, and being the weaker party, had been put to flight, the followers of Tiba pursuing and attacking them as we have just seen. He wished to place himself and people under our protection, as Englishmen, and citizens of Natal, on the territory of which we were now standing. We soon became friends, and when this transpired, several of his wives and head men came to talk with us, the rest of the warriors maintaining a strict guard upon the crest of the ridge.



DOMISE.

Domise had fine intelligent features, enough to make one almost believe that the negro was an intellectual animal after all; but then the Kaffirs are not a pure negro race, for they have a palpable Arabian or Mongolian admixture. Amongst others, the chief's son, the brave young warrior so conspicuous in the fight, and his head wife, a fine young woman named Sharlular, came to see us and to beg our protection.

This lady's head-dress, of her own hair, was a perfect marvel of half-churned butter and artistic skill. The wool, or corkscrew ringlets, about half a foot long, was profusely saturated with the aforesaid grease, straightened out on the top, and made to form a sort of pointed ridge running from the front to the back of her head. At the sides her woolly tresses were gathered into some half-dozen small plaits, and stuck back behind the ears. She wore no other covering than a richly-embroidered apron of deer-skin.

As a result of our conference, it was decided to abandon the ridge and retreat further into Natal, when, if the enemy dared to follow, they would be

invading British soil. As it would have been imprudent to recross the river in face of the excited pursuers, and we were, moreover, satisfied, from the geological formation of the country, that it would be a profitless waste of time to prospect any further down the coast, we unanimously decided upon retiring with Domise's people.

I suppose that we had retreated about a mile, and had just passed through a narrow valley with steep hills on either side, when the loud war-cry of "Lwa! lwa!" (fight! fight!) arose from the rear guard.

Turning back with the chief and all his warriors, we saw that Tiba's men were just entering the narrow pass in pursuit.

The advantage of our position was apparent, and our plan was formed in a moment. Calling upon Domise to array his men in a deep semicircle around the mouth of the valley, we took up our ground in the centre of their line, immediately facing the advancing enemy.

"Tell you what," growled Will Ashwell, preparing his rifle nevertheless, "I guess this child is not going to fight for you Britishers. The niggers can just gobble up all Natal if they like, 'Rule Britannia.'"



SHARLULAR.

However, I knew perfectly well that he was true as steel, and would stand to whatever we would, so I and Roger had determined that it was our duty to the allegiance we owed the British crown to protect the integrity of its soil, and that humanity, in addition, called for our protection of the fugitives.

Just as the leading ranks of the pursuers were about to emerge from the valley, and, with loud reverberating yells were preparing to throw themselves upon our line, we suddenly opened a rapid fire upon them with our rifles, taking care, however, to send the bullets whistling over their heads, as we had no wish for unnecessary bloodshed.

This formidable reception, the volley of a sustained discharge of some thirty shots from our small party within a minute or two, at once put to flight our nearest opponents, who, nimble and active as monkeys, either ran back or clambered up the rocks.

Then, from the midst of the confusion, a chief on horseback galloped forth from the pass, coolly halted to reconnoitre, and, unmoved by the showers of assegais and stones which whistled around him, as our sable allies recognised him by yelling, "Tiba! Tiba! Bularlar Tiba!" (kill Tiba), he leisurely retired, taking off with him the last of his followers.

Recognising the white men, he knew that his prey had escaped him, and, I suppose, he was not willing to provoke the hostility of the Natal Government, for some of whose officers he may have taken our party.

They are a brave and warlike race, these Kaffirs. Every day, by refugees from surrounding native tyranny, they are becoming more numerous in Natal. Already their numbers in that colony far exceed the Maories in New Zealand, whilst the Europeans are not one-tenth so numerous as their pugnacious compatriots of the Island Colony; so, in event of a native war, they will be infinitely worse off—in fact, would hardly stand the shadow of a chance. Fortunately, at present, the Kaffirs seem peaceably disposed, and quite contented with the British or Colonial rule.

The poor people whom we had assisted in repelling their merciless enemies —civil war, the strife of brothers, seems ever the most deadly—were very grateful indeed, and would have given us a fair proportion of the scanty herd of cattle which they had managed to preserve by cunningly sending it a circuitous way in charge of a few boys, whilst they kept only half a dozen oxen with the main body just to show the hoof-marks, and not give their pursuers any suspicion of the ruse. Of course, we declined the offer, though, not to offend the urgent solicitude of Domise, we accepted one fat ox—to become beef for ourselves



AMABACCAS ENCAMPING.

and the diggers at the Umtwalumi—and remained to partake of another, which was killed for a feast in our honour when the column came to a halt.

After retreating about ten miles within the boundary of Natal, we halted amongst the hills near the Umzumbee River, where an American mission station was established, and there the Amabaccas under Domise proceeded to form their kraals, each family of relatives by themselves, with four or five huts.

It did not take long to erect their simple dwellings. A few young saplings cut down, stuck in the ground, and bent over as arches ; bundles of long grass mats for thatch ; and the huts were nearly finished by the time we had eaten our beef and started on our return to the Umtwalumi.

CHAPTER VI.

"Sluicing" Operations—A "Scotchman"—Hegira of Diggers—The Iquifa Falls—A Native Snake Doctor—Monsieur Louis' Adventure with a Singular Snake—Arrive at the Umzinto—A Dangerous Sportsman—A Gold-Digger's Subterranean Adventure: his Treatment by the Australians—The Umzinto—A Difficulty with a few Kaffir Ladies—A New Settler, with 2,000 Acres of Quartz—Fall in with Diggers from Australia—The Gold Formation—Baboons—Natal and its Products.

UPON returning to our old camping-ground we found the Government party of diggers hard at work "sluicing" the flat. They had a fair head of water with which to conduct these operations, for they had obtained a fall of something like twenty-five or thirty feet from the level of the last "flume" or trough, through which they led their ditch to the surface of the bed-rock from which the superincumbent auriferous "wash" was to be sluiced away.

Great gaps had already been washed out of the firmly-cemented stratified alluvium, and in one of these—dirty, grimy with mud and clay, almost naked, and quite disreputable-looking—we found the white members of the *soi-disant* geologist's party hard at work. With their black labourers all around and above them, ground sluicing away with water led from the ditch, the loose alluvial soil covering the wash; with one of their party guiding the nozzle of the hose, and directing a powerful jet of water upon the ancient deposit now crumbling down before the irresistible hydraulic power, and continually splashing and drenching himself as well as his companions, who were busily engaged stirring up the "wash" dirt as the water carried it through their sluice, leaving whatever gold there might be in the stuff at the bottom, caught by the "riffle" bars; with their sunburnt, athletic, almost nude figures leaping about in the great cavity which every moment took them further and further into the bowels of the earth; with the glistening white masses of quartz shining upon them from the regular layers of stones and boulders, each instant washed clean and clear with the powerful jet of water, a curious and characteristic gold-digging scene was presented to our gaze.

A great row took place at the tents of the geologist one night subse-

quent to our return. Upon turning out *en masse* and proceeding to the spot, we found that one of his party, a pugnacious Scotchman, with very red hair and very hard fists, was engaged rolling upon the ground in a pugilistic encounter with a large and powerful Kaffir, whilst the rest of the party were striving to separate them. When peace was restored we managed to ascertain that Sandy had considered his country insulted by the Kaffir, who, it being pay-night, had refused to take some two-shilling pieces, expressing his disgust, and contemptuously calling them "Scotchmen." The point of this little event lies in the explanation that, some years ago, a canny Scot, in Natal, paid off all his native work-people with florins, a coin with which they were unacquainted, and which he paid to them as half-crowns. When the fraud was discovered, the Kaffirs christened the florin a "Scotchman," by which name it has alone been known to them ever since.

Within a week the gold question at the Umtwalumi was fairly settled. After all the expense of making the hydraulic arrangements, the great geologist found that he could realise about twelve grains weight of gold a day—worth about two shillings and fourpence! As it was evident that could not pay, our perspicuous acquaintance now did what he ought to have done before—he had the flat bored, and found that the "wash" did not extend more than some fifteen yards from the rivulet's bank, and was nowhere more auriferous than at its outer edge; accordingly, the Umtwalumi was now abandoned, and there was a general exodus of the diggers.

Our oxen, thanks to rest and plenty of good grass, were now in capital condition, and we in-spanned our waggon for a cruise between the Umtwalumi and Durban.

Proceeding back along the coast road some twenty miles, as far as the Ifafa River, we then turned off by a road which led inland, in order to get upon what we had long since discovered to be the edge and line direction of the auriferous formation. Upon crossing a little river named Iquifa, attracted by the loud roar of falling waters, I clambered some distance up its course, and was rewarded with the sight of a wild, romantic, and, for so small a river, almost grand cataract; where, over a break in their channel of at least a hundred and fifty feet in perpendicular height, the waters fell, roaring, dashing,

and leaping, amidst a spray of snowy foam, from their higher level above to the bare and shining rocks below. There was something wild and savage about the secluded hollow in which I stood at the foot of the falls, hemmed in as it was on every side by huge masses of bare and frowning granite. Altogether it was the most picturesque spot that I ever came across in Natal.

The same day we passed a kraal where the natives seemed considerably excited. Upon asking what was the matter, we were informed that their head-man's little son had been bitten by a snake only a short time previous. But a medicine-man or Kaffir doctor—a queer-looking being, with his wool stuck out to its full length, and decorated all over his body with mysterious little objects, feathers, skins of birds and animals, &c.—declared there was no danger, as he had administered a certain antidote. Naturally enough, this excited our curiosity, and we asked the doctor to tell us what his medicine was composed of. The cunning brute, however, would not divulge his secret, and he stimulated the superstitious feelings of his dingy compatriots by telling us all that his antidote would lose its charm if once it became known to a white man. At this period of the acquaintance I had no little difficulty in restraining the "long Yankee," who began to evince very decided symptoms of a desire to punch the old humbug's head. All we could elicit from him was that the medicine was herbal, and that he had discovered it by having been the witness of a fight between two marmbars—the most venomous snake in South-East Africa—when, one of the reptiles being bitten, he saw it rapidly flee from its antagonist, glide to the adjacent jungle, and there proceed to eat portions of a certain herb, which he took care to observe, and which he subsequently found to be an antidote to any snake-bite. If true, it is a singular discovery; but whether to believe that cunning old Kaffir doctor or not I cannot tell. However, I do know that he had a well-established reputation amongst the natives for his numerous successful cures.

Only the day after this rencontre, Monsieur Louis had an amusing adventure with a blind snake. He was riding along and lingering in the rear, concocting poetry—for he was a terrible poetaster—when we were startled by hearing him shout, "A snaag! a snaag!" and by seeing him spring off his



THE IQUIFA FALLS.

horse, and then, with the stout stick he carried, wage furious war with something on the ground.

My other companions were taking a siesta in the waggon, and paid no further attention to the matter, so I just rode back alone, to see what our excitable and not too perspicuous comrade was about.

He met me half way, crying, excitedly—

"Kom here! Kom here! Tunder und blitzen! I have den killed von *proteus anguinis*—von blue snaag mit der legs—mit two legs! Vat voud I give to take him to der Museum of Luzern? Look at dat! Dere he is, der specimen of the der *proteus anguinis!*"

I saw a small and pale sky-blue snake lying dead and bruised upon the ground, with, apparently, two small legs, situated about a third of its length from the head. Upon closer examination, however, the legs were discovered to be those of a frog, the dead reptile's dinner, projecting from a wound inflicted by our too sanguine Teuton. The snake itself was a curiosity. It was the first and last of the peculiar species that I ever saw; and I have no idea as to its classification or familiarity to naturalists. It was about two and a half feet long, of the pale blue or leaden colour already mentioned, and was totally blind by nature, having no ocular cavity, place for, or sign of eyes. Our Kaffirs stated it to be quite harmless, and declared it to be a blind species, frequenting maize-fields and deposits of rubbish.

Two days after leaving the Umtwalumi we came to a part of the Umzinto River where we heard that the Government possessed some few thousand acres of unallotted coast land available for emigrants. We here found one very agreeable family of colonists, whom I shall always remember with feelings of pleasure. They had a very fair-looking cotton plantation, in full bearing, and were comfortably established in a substantial, one-storied, brick dwelling-house—quite an unusual luxury in those parts. This charming family, the Arbuthnots, had originally emigrated to Natal some twenty years ago, and, like many others, had been ruined by sugar-planting when it first became started there; I can only trust that their cotton speculation may prove more successful.

A few days after our arrival we joined the settlers of the neighbourhood

in a grand hunt, which they had got up in honour of a certain gentleman who was about to leave their circle for another part of the colony. "Kulu karkulu umlungo" (the great big white man), as the natives expressively termed him was of almost gigantic proportions, and, unfortunately, delighted in a fowling-piece of corresponding dimensions, eight in the bore. He had the reputation of being a not too careful sportsman, and, upon one occasion had the extraordinary success of shooting one buck, two dogs, and seven Kaffirs, all with one shot from his formidable weapon. Two of the natives died, and both buck and dogs were killed outright.

Bearing this unique little adventure in mind when we entered the bush, and finding that it was my ill fortune to be placed next the hero thereof, at a distance of some forty yards, I made every effort to get beyond his reach as quickly as possible.

After having penetrated the dense bush for about a quarter of a mile, in a state of profuse perspiration and intolerable heat with the exertions I had made to get ahead of the chase and out of the line of my dangerous neighbour's fire, I clambered up the largest tree I could find, not only for safety, but for a breath of fresh air above the close, hot jungle, and to obtain a coign of vantage from which to shoot any beasts of the chase that might be so unlucky as to come my way.

The noise of the hunt resounded on every side; the yells of the native beaters, the barking of our dogs, and the occasional report of fire-arms. Scarcely had I attained and commenced to enjoy the coolness, advantage, and pleasing prospect over the surrounding bush from my lofty position, when, bang, bang went the double report of a gun close beneath me, followed by the startling yell—

"I'm shot! I'm shot!"

Hastily descending to mother earth, and proceeding to the spot whence came the cry, I found, as I fully expected, one of the hunt had been shot by the "Kulu karkulu umlungo."

This singular sportsman had seen the brown pants of his victim moving amongst the bush, and at once banged away upon them for a buck. Fortunately, although several buck-shot had passed through fleshy parts of

his legs, and he was pretty well peppered with smaller shot, the wounded man was not dangerously hurt, and was able to walk home. He was the only game his shooter hit that day. I cannot help believing that all the men of the neighbourhood felt considerably relieved when their gigantic friend, gun and all, bade them adieu.

Upon communicating with the Government Agent, or Field Cornet, at the Umzinto, we were shown all the unoccupied lands; but as we found that here, as at the Umtwalumi, all the best ground was given to the blacks, and the benign authorities of Natal would have located us up upon the crags, amongst the vultures and eagles, we gave up all idea of settling at that part, and went on in our search after Ophir.

On the banks of a little creek named the Umshlangar, we came across one of the parties that had abandoned the Umtwalumi. They were, and had been, working with an energy and perseverance worthy of reward; but out of one of the shafts they sunk, thirty feet deep through the flinty conglomerate of a "wash," they obtained just seven specks of gold, worth together about threepence! This, too, was as good a spot as they had found.

The leader of this party, an old Australian, was, without exception, the greatest yarner, the greatest disciple of His Excellency Baron Munchausen whom I ever met. One of his yarns in especial afforded us no end of fun.

We were outspanned near his tent, and were condoling with him upon the wretchedly poor prospect of finding payable gold in Natal.

"Wal," said the "long Yankee," "I guess, stranger, you will soon git up and git—give it up, eh? No diggings in Natal."

"Aha, don't be too sure of that," replied the digger, mysteriously. "I know a certain part in this colony where there's any quantity of gold. It's an extraordinary affair. I discovered the place myself, three hundred feet below the surface of the earth."

"Take another drop, stranger," said the "long Yankee," with diplomatic tact, offering him a stiff glass of hollands from his flask.

"Thanks," responded the possessor of the mysterious secret, disposing of the spirits as he had already done twice or thrice previously, and without

apparent effect, excepting that he now became, if possible, more voluble than usual, and continued—

"Yes. I discovered gold six years ago in Natal, when I owned a farm up country, but *where*—that's my secret. Well, I was out one day at a wild, rocky, uncultivated part of the country, about a mile or so from my land, when I thought I heard a deep, rumbling, rushing sort of noise in the earth beneath me. I got off my horse, lay down, and put my ear to the ground, and then, sure enough, heard a noise like that of a running subterranean river. After searching about for a long time, I at length found a narrow crack in the earth, from which the noise proceeded so loud and plain that I knew there was a direct and open communication with the water below. I went home, got a long line, returned to the spot, sounded, and, at a depth of about three hundred feet struck water, and with a few feet more came to the bottom of it. I told my wife about this discovery, and that I intended to widen the crack, get lowered down, and explore the underground river. But then there was such a scene! She fainted, went into hysterics, then fainted again, and afterwards went on so that I was obliged to pretend that I had abandoned the intention. This made it awkward, as I could not take any of my Kaffirs away from their work in the day without exciting my wife's suspicions. However, I hit upon a plan at last. Pretending to have business which would detain me all night at Harrismith" (he let slip the name of this town without noticing it) "I returned after dark, roused up the Kaffirs and a Griqua whom I employed as overseer, and, with a winch, a stout rope, a lantern, shovel, and pan, proceeded to the spot. We dug the crack wide enough, placed the winch over it, and passed the rope with a couple of round turns over the barrel. Then I lighted the lantern, slung the shovel and pan over my shoulder, made myself fast to the rope in a running bowline-knot, put my Griqua—whom I could trust to hold on to the other part of the rope behind the winch—to slack away as required, and was slowly lowered down the chasm. I had seen indications of gold in many parts of the neighbouring country, and so had taken my shovel and pan. As I descended through the crack I saw strata of quartz, talcose rock, shale, pyrites, talc, and other indications usually found in auriferous localities, glittering and shining all around me, and

sparkling in myriad flashes in the rays of my lantern. After getting down about sixty feet I suddenly became clear of the narrow fissure, in passing through which I had experienced no little difficulty in avoiding the sharp projections and jutting angles of rock. I now entered upon a huge open space or cave, the sides of which were almost invisible through the deep darkness pervading the weird, gloomy, and subterranean place. At last I reached the bottom, and found myself upon the sands of a swiftly-running river, about four feet deep and thirty wide. Placing my lantern upon a ledge of rock, I went to work with spade and pan, and, by Heavens! gentlemen, after 'panning' for about half an hour, I washed out about as much gold-dust as you could hold in the palm of your hand! I could not stay there any longer. What with the deep silence and solitude, the heavy oppressive gloom, and the dark black shadows starting into ghostly life under the feeble light of my lantern, I became infected with the mysterious, unearthly nature of the place, and could not longer resist the influence of supernatural fancies; so I secured the gold, picked up my tools, and, pulling the small string (of which I had brought down one end) as a signal, my Kaffirs slowly hove me up from the bowels of the earth."

"Wal, stranger, did you prospect your underground river again?" asked the "long Yankee."

"No. My wife found it out, and made such a fuss that I did not care to venture down again. Besides, very soon afterwards I was obliged to sell my farm, and went elsewhere to make a living. Then, I can tell you, it was no joke going down, down into that gloomy place alone, with only a few niggers to depend upon for ever getting out of it again."

"Wal," persisted our practical friend, "where is your prospect? where's the gold?"

"Oh, lost, years ago. But, I tell you, there's any quantity there. If we don't succeed here, we are going to that part before long," said the wonderful narrator.

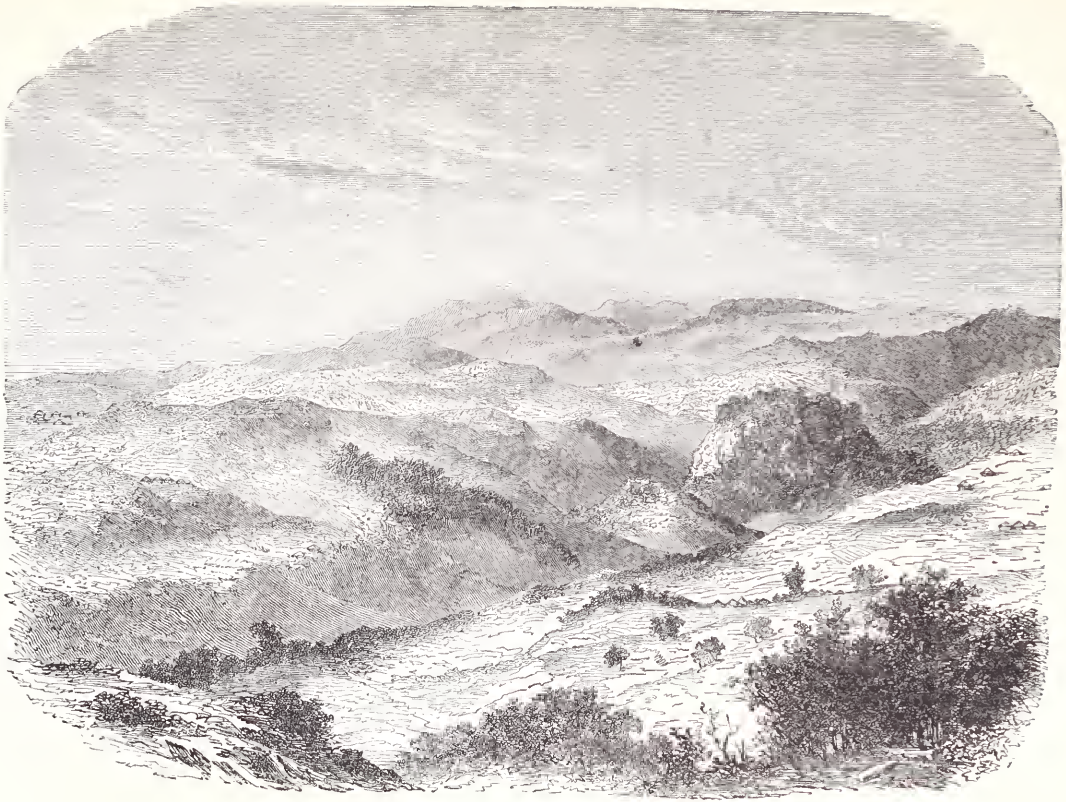
He never did go, to my knowledge, and I cannot say that his general veracity made me place implicit credence in the story.

Shortly after spinning us this tough yarn, the unfortunate wight went to

Durban to obtain a fresh supply of provisions, &c., for his party, and whilst in the town fell in with a large number of diggers who had just arrived from Australia. After "hollands," he was foolish enough to brag of his discoveries at the Umzinto, Umtwalumi, and other places, and to exhibit only the few paltry grains of gold in his possession as a proof. This enraged the diggers, for in Australia no man dare pretend that he has discovered a payable gold field; and, besides, they were naturally not a little irritated at having been, like ourselves, decoyed to Africa by equally exaggerated and untruthful reports; so they visited condign vengeance upon the unfortunate man. They hoisted him upon a chair, carried him, to the accompaniment of rough music, ignominously through the streets, and then at the town pump gave him such a cold water cure as he neither soon forgot nor easily recovered from. In fact, had it not been for the intercession of a poor "mission" Kaffir who was passing by, and who begged that they would not kill the man, his life would have been in great danger. This good Samaritan, after rescuing him from the clutches of those rough men, found his hat for him, gave him a hot glass of grog, and a sixpence also, for the unlucky story teller had lost the little money he possessed during the treatment he had received.

All along the banks of the Umzinto and in its tributaries we found gold, but in such wretchedly scanty quantity as to be unworthy of attention. Following up the course of this river, we came upon the line of country which we had already settled in our minds as the formation from which the gold proceeded. It was a hilly, broken part of the country, and the stream flowed far below, in a deep channel beneath the surrounding hills. It formed the first of the steppes or plateaus for which Natal is famous, and constituted the intermediate stage between the low-lying tropical valleys of the coast district, about fifteen miles broad, and the high uplands of the bare grazing country.

In order to verify our theory of the gold formation, we went further inland, by a road leading towards Griqua Land. During this trip we got into a row with some black ladies, whose male relatives were away from home working at the farms of some of the colonists. We had outspanned not far from a kraal, and in the evening had been amused by the friendliness and



VIEW ON THE UMZINTO.

vainness of a regular sable coquette, a young girl who came with several women to try and sell us mealies, sweet potatoes, and pumpkins. We became quite upon good terms with these people, and had great fun by getting up races with the girl, who had a splendid figure, strong, firm, and robust, and hardened by constant exercise upon the hills, and who was able to outrun every one of our party, for she was lithe, fleet, and active as a young antelope.

Early in the morning, just after daylight, we were aroused from our slumber in the waggon by hearing furious feminine outcries. Putting my head outside the tent front to see what might be the matter, I was surprised to see our young lady friend of the evening dancing about in passion, whirling a big stick, and accompanied in her furious gesticulation by sundry ill-favoured old negresses. The moment she saw me, she yelled—

"Puma, umlungo! Puma, umlungo!" (Come forth, white man! Come forth, white man!)

But as that irate damsel's actions were so threatening, I preferred a parley, and blandly inquired, "What for?"

"What for?" yelled the chorus, with deep sarcasm. "Come forth and see. Come and look at our mealies!"

The terrible truth now dawned upon me. Our oxen had been into their mealie gardens!

Where was the forelouper, whose duty it was to look after the team? I called for him, but echo alone replied, until the damsel scornfully informed me, swinging her formidable stick in a deadly sort of battle exercise, that she had already chased him to the adjacent hills.

How changed was her manner from that of the preceding evening! I could not help thinking of the proverb that love is near akin to hate. At night she seemed affectionate; in the morning would have murdered us.

They knew well enough that it was the fault of the forelouper, and, I verily believe, would have beaten him to death if they had caught him; but fear lent wings to his feet, and he managed to escape even the young girl.

When they became somewhat pacified, we accompanied the ladies to their mealie gardens, and found large portions of the crop had been trampled and eaten by our oxen. We compromised the matter, after much trouble, by

payment of ten shillings, and by promising to beat our offending servant when we found him. Wholesome dread of the not too feminine complainants kept him in hiding until dark, when he joined us at our next halting-place, a considerable distance away, and was treated to a little strap by the "long Yankee."

During the day's *trek* we came upon some natives in the act of building a rough hut for a settler who had just located himself upon a broad stretching upland sweep of grazing ground, for the purpose of stock farming. They proved to be not very well-favoured members of the Amaponda Kaffir tribe, which resides beyond the western boundary of Natal.

We found the proprietor at a long, thatched shed, which served as a temporary dwelling. Upon ascertaining our business, he declared that his farm contained 2,000 acres of quartz. He called for his horse, and begged us to go and examine those reefs, which he considered the "right sort of stuff," and believed to be auriferous. For many a day afterwards this bucolic visionary and his 2,000 acres of quartz became a standing joke amongst us. After a long ride over rough ground we were shown a mountain of crystalline sandstone for the quartz reefs.

"Good-bye, stranger," said the "long Yankee," laconically, directly he saw this stuff, and turning his horse's head in the direction of our waggon; "when you find gold in that quartz of yours you'll find longitude at the same time, I shouldn't wonder. Valuable claim, stranger; beats 'striking ile' into fits. Come on, boys."

And, bidding the settler good morning, off we went, leaving him to contemplate his sandstone mountain alone.

Still further inland we came across a party of thirty Australian diggers, out on a prospecting tour like ourselves, and who had lately arrived, with two or three hundred others, lured to Africa in search of Ophir.

The natives had the most extraordinary opinions concerning these men. Except soldiers, they had never seen such large bodies of white men living and moving through the country together. Certainly they had never before seen anything like this collection of rough, powerful, and hardy athletes. One of the extraordinary ideas the Kaffirs had was, that these men, coming



A NEW SETTLER'S BUILDERS.

from a barren country without trees or females, had come to Natal in order to seize upon and carry off their young women. Consequently, wherever the Australians moved, young women were not to be seen; at least, not for some time, until the absurd idea became exploded.

So far as bone, muscle, and endurance went, this party was composed of magnificent specimens of men; and presented the *beau ideal*, the very perfection of gold-digger life. So far as the individual social position of its varied members was concerned, it comprised every grade, from nobleman to journeyman baker, though sailors seemed, as usual, to predominate.

We were satisfied at finding that the opinion of these experienced men coincided entirely with our own, viz., that the gold formation extended from a base line of some forty miles along the sea-coast, from the Impambinyoni River to the Umzumbi, in the shape of an isosceles triangle to an apex near the Umzinto, on the Umshlangar Creek; that the gold proceeded by disintegration from quartz reefs somewhere along the two landward sides of this triangle; that the distance from the base, or sea, to its apex was about fifteen miles; and that, immediately on leaving this formation, all trace of the precious metal disappeared. Neither they nor ourselves had found a speck of gold beyond it; and we further agreed that, if any payable quantity existed there, it was in the quartz reefs at a considerable depth, to prospect for which, or, in digger parlance, to go "reefing," would cost some thousands of pounds in merely testing mining works. Within the triangular line the geological formation was composed of various crystalline and metamorphic rocks, upon a basis of blue talcose granite, interspersed with veins of quartz; around and beyond this wedge of igneous material the country was composed of slate, shale, sandstone, limestone, &c.

Although, as yet, neither our party nor the diggers had found any sign of gold beyond the above described formation, and had but faint idea of doing so thus far inland, about fifty miles; still, we never gave up testing and prospecting every likely spot; and when, after spending a day very pleasantly at the Australians' camp, we bade them adieu, we left them hard at work.

Whilst travelling along these upland wilds we fared sumptuously upon

oribe and paou—antelope of the plains—and the wild turkey; besides these good things, it was seldom that a day passed over in which some of our party did not manage to knock over a few partridges.

But then, if possible, the scenery of the long, bare sweeps of hill and plain in these inland districts was even less picturesque, more monotonous, more unendurable, dull, and unsightly, than the aspect of the bush-clothed coast belt. Up here hardly a solitary shrub above the genus grass could anywhere be seen. The few small species of trees occasionally met with in the kloofs or hollows of the hills were of a soft, pithy nature, quite unfit for firewood—all of which we had to carry from the coast land, or else, like the natives hereabouts, burn cattle dung dried in the sun. This part of the colony is covered with a rich grass and clover, and would form a splendid sheep and cattle country, were it not that the vicissitudes of a changeable climate, though not at all extreme, seem to disagree with the former, while the latter are not unfrequently swept off in thousands by the scourge known as "lung sickness." Still, from Natal, and the two Dutch Republics adjoining, the export of wool forms one of their most valuable branches of commerce.

At the Impambinyoni River we passed a huge and towering cliff, the perpendicular face of which, overhanging the water, was perforated with numerous caves and fissures, and formed the home of vast numbers of the large black baboon. It was most amusing to see these animals, early in the morning, steal down to rob the fields of the Kaffirs, and obtain their breakfasts.

The crops were guarded by boys or men, armed with assegais and knobkerries, which they are very expert at throwing.

Down would come the baboons, marshalled in regular, military-looking bodies by their greyest and most experienced leaders. These cunning caricatures of men displayed the strategy of accomplished tacticians. Whilst certain parties of them crept down as though endeavouring to conceal themselves, and then made a vigorous feigned attack upon the cultivated fields, and which always succeeded in distracting the attention of the watchers, others having crept up silently and unnoticed, in a different direction, suddenly burst into the fields, and retreated in triumph, carrying off pumpkins, sweet potatoes, or cobs of Indian corn.



AUSTRALIAN DIGGERS PROSPECTING.

It was really most amusing to see those baboons running off and climbing up the rocks to their caves in the cliff, with huge pumpkins held tight and embraced by their arms, as they waddled swiftly, though ungracefully, along on their hind legs, halting every now and then to look keenly and suspiciously behind, to see if they were pursued, and uttering the while sharp, short, though hoarse and formidable barking roars.

In some countries these wholesale depredations would have been a serious matter for the natives; but here, fortunately for them, the goodness of Providence, the bountifulness of Nature, provided them with land so rich and prolific as to produce an abundance of food with but little labour, sufficient for monkeys as well as men; the women, being the cultivators, had to supply both—not a very enviable position. The men, storing up malice against the baboons, treated the unfortunates whom they occasionally caught in traps with shocking barbarity, impaling them with sticks, and then letting them loose in the woods; and the half-human monstrosities retaliated—so the Kaffirs assured me—by killing their children whenever they had an opportunity of catching any of the little black innocents alone!

Returning along the northern edge of the triangular auriferous formation, we met with no better prospect than before; only, at a place near the head of the Umshlangar Creek, we discovered the richest spot, where, perhaps, in the bed of the stream, a hard-working digger of experience might have earned—until that source became soon exhausted—about eighteenpence a day. We now decided upon abandoning the search after Ophir in Natal, and left a party of four of the Australians working at this spot, from whence, altogether, about ten ounces of gold have been obtained. By the last intelligence from Natal, it now takes the few men there a period of eight weeks to obtain half an ounce; so gold-digging in the colony will soon be abandoned.

In my opinion, the one great feature and attraction of Natal is its climate, which is really magnificent, and assimilates nearer to that of the Peruvian coast than any other country I have visited. The midsummer of Natal is at Christmas, the midwinter in June. Curiously enough, the latter period is very like an exceptionally fine midsummer June in England, with the chief difference that the nights are cooler, and that a glorious, invigorating,

slightly frosty atmosphere prevails during the brilliant, cloudless sunshine, day after day. The average winter temperature is about sixty-five to seventy degrees; that of summer, eighty to ninety. The winter is the dry season, during which the rainfall does not exceed half an inch per month, and the pastures then get dry and brown; but in the summer four inches of rain fall in each month, and the face of the country becomes clothed with the most luxuriant and vigorous vegetation. Violent thunderstorms, however, with vivid and dangerous lightning, happen not unfrequently; the heavy rain drenching the land, and greatly swelling the numerous rivers and tributaries.

The "Natal fever" is insolvency. Financial embarrassment—bred from defective experience on the part of the planters, borrowed capital, and accumulated interest—is the rule. Money is terribly scarce, the settlers mostly poor, and the whole colony suffers greatly from impecuniosity. Its great drawback is the total want of navigable rivers, and the absence of any other means of transport than the slow, expensive ox-waggon. There would not yet be sufficient work for railways, and the cost of construction in so broken, hilly a country, would be enormous. The colonists could not raise a loan, and are already too heavily taxed to bear more; a tax for a railway would probably be the last straw to break the camel's back.

Like Singapore, Natal possesses a sort of intermediate, or semi-tropical, semi-temperate climate, where everything will grow, and nothing (that has yet been tried) come to perfection.

As yet, the two great staples raised in the coast district are coffee and sugar; but, with regard to the latter, it does not seem to be perfectly suitable to the climate, and its planters are not rich enough for their undertaking. What with their inefficient machinery, the expense of labour and raising the cane, the waggon transport, and the high rate of freight to England, I do not see how they can ever compete with the West Indies and other old-established plantations. Besides this, the occasional frosts in winter often ruin thousands of acres of the cane.

The permanent success of coffee seems equally problematical. The berries, so far as I could ascertain from personal observation and inquiry, never ripen regularly or together, owing partly, I consider, to the want of

proper pruning, and partly to the unsuitability of the climate—the midsummer being too wet and hot, the midwinter too dry and frosty. All the great coffee-producing countries—Ceylon, Java, Brazil, Arabia, and the West Indies—are more or less inter-tropical.

Of all the products now under treatment in Natal, I look upon cotton as the most promising, especially "Sea Island," on the low-lying valleys near the sea. Next to this comes wool; but why do the settlers neglect to try the mohair goat? Upon the hills and inland steppes it would thrive to perfection, and the hardy animal would live in health where the sheep die off in hundreds. It has already been observed that the "lung sickness" is the bane of cattle-rearing; but horse-breeding offers far better prospect of success. Wheat does not come to perfection in Natal, but its white maize is equal to any in the world, and should command a large export trade.

Instead of wasting their money upon products belonging to other climes, is it not singular that the colonists do not pay attention to those which flourish in similar latitudes? Why have they neglected tea and silk? Like Central China, the great region of those valuable staples, Natal lies upon the thirtieth parallel of latitude from the equator; and although it is south whilst the former is north, its climate and indigenous products are so similar, the white mulberry grows so luxuriantly everywhere, and such fine silk has already been produced experimentally, whilst the tea-plant is known to succeed, that it cannot cease to be a matter of wonder no one has yet devoted exclusive attention to these valuable commodities.

The indigo plant grows like a weed all over the colony, as well as the castor-oil tree and the gall-berry; but these things, also, flourish on quite neglected. At many places we saw in the bush mahogany, lignum-vitæ, and other valuable hard woods. Fibres ought to be commercially successful, from the abundant growth of the banana, and numerous species of fibrous grasses and creeper. Rich tobacco grows like a weed all over the colony, and its cultivation is the most successful thing the Natalians have ever undertaken; unfortunately, none of them properly understand its manufacture.

TABULAR STATEMENT OF THE PRODUCTIONS OF THE COLONY OF NATAL, from the Catalogue of Contributions from the Colony in the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1867.

STAPLE ARTICLES OF FOOD.					
FARM PRODUCE.		VEGETABLES.		FRUITS.	
SEMI-TROPICAL DISTRICTS.	TEMPERATE DISTRICTS.	SEMI-TROPICAL DISTRICTS.	TEMPERATE DISTRICTS.	SEMI-TROPICAL DISTRICTS.	TEMPERATE DISTRICTS.
Sugar	Wheat	Sweet Potatoes	Potato	Banana	Apple
Coffee	Barley	Gourd	Turnip	Pine Apple	Pear
Arrowroot	Oats	Bean	Carrot	Orange	Peach
Indigo	Maize	Tomato	Parsnip	Lemon	Plum
Tea	Beans	Capsicum	Spinach	Fig	Nectarine
Tobacco	Buckwheat	Eschalot	Lettuce	Grape	Apricot
Millet	Rye	Wild Asparagus	Cabbage	Loquat	Walnut
Cayenne Pepper	Peas	Yam	Cauliflower	Guava	Mulberry
Pepper	Beef	Cucumber	Celery	Tamarind	Quince
Rice	Mutton	Pumpkin	Asparagus	Limes	Strawberry
Ginger	Veal	Vegetable Marrow	Beet	Citron	Grape
Kaffir Corn	Pork	Mandioca	Onion	Almond	Medlar

GENERAL PRODUCE.					
FIBRES.	MINERALS, EARTHS, AND CLAYS.	DOMESTICATED ANIMALS AND BIRDS.	BIRDS OF SPORT.	ANIMALS OF CHASE.	MISCELLANEOUS.
Wool	Coal	Horse	Snipe	Lion	Timber
Goat's Hair	Iron	Ox	Quail	Panther	Gums
Rhea	Copper	Mule	Plover	Buffalo	Resins
Cotton	Limestone	Donkey	Partridge	Hippopotamus	Tannin
Silk	Fuller's Earth	Sheep	Wild Turkey	Hart-beest	Ivory
Hemp	Granite	Goat	Guinea Fowl	Eland	Horns
Flax	Sandstone	Pig	Wild Goose	Antelope	Skins
Jute	Marble	Turkey	Bustard	Hare	Oils
Aloe	Porcelain Clay	Goose	Wild Duck	Rabbit	Bones
Native Flax	Potter's Clay	Duck	Pheasant	Otter	Indigo
,, Hemp	Millstone	Fowl	Teal	Jackal	Spirits
,, Cotton	Steatite	Pigeon	Widgeon	Wild Hog	Butter

CHAPTER VII.

Arrival of 200 Australian Gold-Diggers at Durban: Treatment they Experienced—We Decide on Travelling to the Reputed Gold Regions of the Interior—Joined by the Van Mey er Family—Plan and Start of our Expedition—Carlotta—The Marmbar: Adventure with One—Gold-digging at the Tugela—The Auriferous Formation—Miss van Meyer's Influence on our Camp Life—She Improves our Music—A Tragic Story—We are nearly dashed to pieces—Meet with Bushmen—A Bushman Musician.

On returning to Durban from our unsuccessful expedition down South, we found the worthy citizens of that luckless town in no little consternation and alarm. About two hundred stalwart gold-miners had just arrived from Australia, decoyed by the mendacious, interested, and grossly exaggerated statements which the Natalians had allowed to go forth to the world. Naturally enough, the diggers, on finding how completely they had been deceived, felt not a little annoyed with their deceivers. These, knowing that they were in fault, had taken the alarm directly news first reached them by the previous arrivals—some of whom were those we encountered down the coast—of the coming rush. Thus, directly the vessel containing the two hundred diggers was telegraphed from the lighthouse as in sight, orders were issued by the authorities to the custom-house, commanding that institution to detain the arms of the dreaded passengers when they landed, and not to give them up upon payment, as usual, of the fixed rate of duty.

This proceeding—like the precious proclamation which the Natal Government now issued (after the harm had been done, by permitting the false reports of vast gold discoveries to circulate for a year uncontradicted) stating that they, the wise rulers, possessed no authentic information as to the existence of gold in paying quantity in South-East Africa—was simply adding insult to injury. They had been decoyed from their homes in Australia, a distance of twelve thousand miles, by the lying reports the Natalians had sent forth, and now, upon their arrival, were treated as dangerous and lawless characters.

Of course, unaware of the dodge that was being perpetrated against them, the Australians gave up their arms to the custom-house officials; but when they found they were to be detained, they, reasonably enough, expressed no little indignation.

As it happened, they were a particularly respectable set; all had means, and some were even wealthy. They were the very pick of the gold-digging population in the sister colony, and it would have been impossible to select a finer body of men in any part of the world.

Besides seizing their arms, the Natalians even sent for a portion of the Cape Mounted Riflemen, to protect them from the unarmed men their conscience seemed to tell them they had injured so deeply as to make dangerous. After this, and after also ascertaining that no reliable information existed from the reported gold-fields so far inland, the greater number of the Australians at once abandoned these inhospitable shores, and returned by the same vessel in which they had arrived.

The particular event which had produced the lively agitation in which we found the Durbanites was this. A group of the Australians, being watched as they walked through the streets, said to themselves, purposely loud enough to be overheard, that they would burn down the town.

What with cavalry, infantry, and police, camped and stationed here, there, and everywhere, Durban resembled a place in a state of siege. I could not help thinking that these worthy Natalians were but degenerate successors to the stanch old Dutch Boers who discovered the country, took possession of it, and held their own—a small band of brave, determined, farmer adventurers, cut off from all resource, aid, and refuge but their own right arms—against the innumerable swarms of hostile and warlike Kaffirs.

After a long discussion, our party at length came to the decision of proceeding to the inland gold regions, so as to judge of their value for ourselves; all information that could be obtained being so conflicting and unreliable. It was the vote of Roger and myself that carried the day, for I had quite made up my mind not to settle at Natal, and did not like to leave the country without proving by personal experience the untruth of the reports which had induced us to visit it; whilst my chum was eager for the trip because he hoped

that we should be accompanied by Mynheer van Meyer and his charming daughter.

In this he was gratified, for a week after our return to Durban that gentleman arrived with his waggon and team, accompanied by his son and daughter, having succeeded in disposing of Zwartkop Farm, and being now ready to join us in our weary pilgrimage after Ophir.

As, from all we could hear of the Taltin and the adjacent gold regions, the country thereabouts was of primary formation, and constituted the watershed of nearly all the large rivers running to the eastward, to the Indian Ocean. We determined, instead of striking directly inland upon the straight and usual course to that part, to skirt along the eastern slope of the Drakensberg Mountains, and so, by crossing these rivers about midway between their source and the sea, ascertain whether any "alluvial gold" existed in the "made ground"—whether the precious metal had been brought down and deposited in "drift" or "placers" by the waters. It was only in such a case —in the event of the precious metal being found in alluvial ground—that a payable gold-field could exist; as the quartz mining could only be undertaken by rich companies.

Loading up our waggons with a good six months' store of provisions—ammunition, beads, bangles, glasses, blankets, and other things, for barter with the natives—we started at last, and were now off after Ophir in earnest, as we intended to cross the very districts marked as Sofala, Ophir, and Monomotapa, and described as rich in gold by the ancient geographers.

Our expedition now consisted of thirteen individuals in all, including our Ganymede, Tom, the two Kaffir drivers, and their respective foreloupers.

Mynheer van Meyer's waggon was a splendid concern—though rough, immensely strong; and though unwieldly, fitted with every possible convenience. In the fore part a comfortable little nest was made amongst the stores for his daughter; it constituted her parlour, boudoir, bed-room, and all, and was really a thoroughly private and by no means uncomfortable abode—always providing that the tenant could become accustomed to its certainly very circumscribed extent. The Boers are masters of waggon travelling, and the fair Boeresses or "Africanders" can be quite at home and at

their ease in such circumstances, where European ladies would be horribly uncomfortable.

Mynheer was a sturdy specimen of his race, with short-cropped light hair; large, honest-looking, blue eyes; and a huge meerschaum. The son was a strapping young fellow, nearly six feet high, and broad in proportion; and if not likely ever to startle the world by any astounding display of genius and quickness of intellect, he seemed, like his father, a genuine and honest Dutchman—a character, if not enchanting, at least sterling and trustworthy.

The fair Carlotta was the enchantress. To her fell quite sufficient gift of fascination—quite sufficient share of charms, both physical and spiritual, to satisfy any reasonable Dutch family, and enchant any male beholder. I shall not attempt to describe her; suffice it to say that I found Roger's fervid and amorous description but little of an exaggeration, as the accompanying sketch will prove.

The road by which we now travelled was far better than anything we had met in that line down the coast, and led to Maritzberg (the capital), then on to York, Greytown, the Tugela River (the northern boundary of Natal) and the Kaffir country known as Zulu Land. Along this level road we proceeded at the rate of thirty miles a day, passed through Maritzberg on the second day after our start; and once more began a wild life in the African wilderness.

South-East Africa is a land of snakes, and possesses, I believe, the most deadly, dangerous, and formidable species in the world; this is a terrible reptile, known as the marmbar, which is divided into three varieties—black, brown, and green. Each kind attains a length of over twenty-five feet. All are equally fierce, strong, and incredibly swift; though, very fortunately, none are numerous. The marmbar is the only venomous snake in the world which grows to such an enormous and formidable size; all others being quite small, and only dangerous by reason of their poison-fangs, and that not unless they are interfered with. But this monster has the size, strength, and terrible appearance of the largest boa, and is, in addition, the most deadly venomous of all the poisonous species, its powerful bite being certain death within an



CARLOTTA.

hour or two. Although it does not use its great strength to crush, but, like all of its nature, uses its venomous fangs as its mode of attack; instead of being sluggish, and often dormant, like the boa, or retiring and given to getting out of the way, like most poisonous snakes, the brute, when fallen in with, is only too ready for hostilities. Availing itself of its size and strength, and being naturally of a fierce, defiant disposition, it seldom gives place either to man or beast, but springs forward eager to attack, in a way and manner peculiarly its own. This frightful serpent obeys not *in toto* the command "On thy belly shalt thou go," for, with a third of its length off the ground



CONFLUENCE OF THE BUFFALO AND TUGELA RIVERS.

and its small, diamond-shaped flat head raised high in the air, it rushes along with a peculiar horizontal undulation, the elevated head portion of its body swaying rapidly and gracefully from side to side, and held high aloft above the grass and brambles, like the arched neck of the elegant though much conceited swan. Then the marmbar is so incredibly swift that it has been known to keep up with a man mounted on the fastest horse! Of course, so large a snake cannot be either resisted or assailed as the smaller kinds; nothing but fire-arms can prevail against it, and a fowling-piece best of all, if, well loaded with heavy small shot, and fired within a dozen yards. Woe to

the poor wretch without a steady nerve and a well-loaded gun, if attacked by a grown-up marmbar; in such case he would but have time for a prayer *in articulo mortis.*

It was near the confluence of the Tugela and Buffalo Rivers that I saw my first marmbar. The meeting of the two streams formed a rather pretty view, from the trees, bush, and verdure with which each bank, as well as the separating peninsula of land in the centre, was clothed to the very water's edge.

After admiring this for a little while, and finding that the Tugela was here too deep to be crossed without wetting the goods at the bottom of our waggons, we turned off, and proceeded further inland up its course, until we came to the lands and house of a Mr. Johnson, who was a stock-farmer there. This gentleman, who came out of the waggon-road to meet us, very kindly made us outspan and remain at his house to dinner. The meal was just over when we were all startled by the loud cries suddenly heard outside.

"Marmbar! marmbar!" was the cry; and, in a moment, all the Kaffir labourers and servants who had been employed about the outhouses surrounding the dwelling came rushing frantically in at the door.

Out of the noise and confusion our host managed to elicit the fact that a huge marmbar was coming up the hill on which the house was situated.

Thomas, our not undaunted servitor, at the first alarm had dropped the plates and dishes he happened to be at the time carrying—thereby exciting a shout of fury from our host, who was rather weak in the crockery line, such articles being nowhere attainable under a distance of 100 miles, at Greytown, the nearest village—that timorous coloured individual had then betaken himself, by dint of various frantic efforts, to climb the wooden pillars supporting the roof, to one of the beams that ran across from the tops of the walls; the rest of the Kaffirs, with only a few exceptions, rushing backwards and forwards, vainly striving to hide themselves in places of security, and generally creating a scene of no little panic and confusion.

As ill luck would have it, not a gun in the house was loaded, and no one knew where to find the caps. Myself and companions had not thought of bringing any arms from the waggons, so we just snatched up sticks, poles,

agricultural implements, whatever came to hand, and, accompanied by the few courageous Kaffirs, armed with assegais and knobkerries, went forth to look for the marmbar.

We had not far to go. Just appearing upon the level of the hill came that dreaded snake. With its angular little head, and the upper part of its ugly black body raised high in the air, and swaying from side to side with the peculiar motion already described, it was rushing along in full pursuit of a frightened and cackling brood of fowls; but all of them succeeded in escaping, by flying for refuge to the branches of a tree.

At this moment we startled the reptile by our loud shouts and sudden appearance. We hurled sticks and stones at it; the Kaffirs dexterously threw their assegais and knobkerries, several of the latter striking it with great force, but not sufficiently to place it *hors de combat.*

Standing high erect upon its tail, and eyeing us defiantly for a moment, with its vividly gleaming, fierce little bead-like eyes, which seemed starting forth from its head, it hesitated, as though in doubt whether to spring upon us or retreat; and then, deciding upon the latter prudent course, went off in a rapid, stately manner, and dashed in at the solitary entrance of the hut which the Kaffirs had only just abandoned. Some of us immediately ran to the little bee-hive opening, and stood on either side, with uplifted weapons, ready to strike the monster across its neck and back, to dislocate the vertebræ, when it came out. This was a very rash proceeding, although we had not time to think about the matter when acting so, as it was very unlikely that our blows would succeed in disabling so large a snake—in which case some of us would certainly have been bitten and killed. Fortunately, however, the marmbar neither liked his lodging nor chose to leave it by the way he had entered. The loud shouts of our comrades in the rear called us away from the door, just in time to see the reptile disappearing, with the same stately motion, in the thick bush at the nearest side of the hill, having just gone clean through the thatched wall of the hut. This snake was at least eighteen feet in length, and was one of the black species.

Bidding adieu to the hospitable settler, we went forward on our way, arriving, shortly before dark, at a place near the Tugela, where gold had been

discovered during our expedition to the south of Durban. At this place we found one party of diggers at work, consisting of a Mr. Stewart—an old Australian who had discovered the existence of the precious metal in that locality—who owned a farm near by, and who had been joined by several young colonists.

Singularly enough we found that the conditions under which gold was



GOLD DIGGERS AT THE TUGELA.

found in this part were the very opposite of those applying to the southern locality. There, the particles were all drift, or "alluvial gold," much water-worn, and buried at the very bottom of the ancient, firmly-cemented deposits of stone and alluvium ; whereas here the little specks were all found almost upon the surface, were quite rough and unworn—"reef gold," in fact—and did not exist at all in the older deposits of drift. In the one place the minute

portions of the precious metal only existed in the most ancient alluvial formations; in the other only in the most modern. Moreover, whilst in the south no sign of the quartz-reefs or matrix could be anywhere discovered, at this place it was evident that the gold had only been disintegrated and carried, in comparatively modern times, from some of the numerous quartz veins, here, there, and everywhere, close by, intersecting the surrounding granite hills.

As for the quantity in which the auriferous particles existed, it was, if possible—if anything less than so small an amount could exist—even less than at the Umtwalumi. This was not Ophir, the place whence, in the vague and venerable old-world days, came those hundreds of thousands of golden talents, that was quite certain.

We remained outspanned here for three days, in which time, prospecting in every direction, we completely satisfied ourselves that no paying gold-field could possibly exist in the neighbourhood. The rock formation was of the same species as at the triangular patch in the south of the colony, and, as there, if the precious metal existed in greater quantity than already ascertained, it could only be at a great depth. To this conclusion, in this case, we had the best of reasons for arriving, the visible, and, afterwards proved, faintly auriferous little quartz veins being probably the very insignificant "leaders" of the main quartz reefs deep below.

The fact that gold, though in such very infinitesimal quantity, was proved to exist here, at the Tatin, and at a part beyond that river, induced us to believe that it would also be found wherever the same geological formation cropped up, in a due north line—upon which all these places were situated—from the coast of Natal, about the Umzinto, to the interior of South-Eastern Africa, a thousand miles inland. The same feature, I believe, of gold running in a direction from north to south, exists in most if not all countries where it is found.

The fair Carlotta exercised a sweet and elevating charm over our heterogeneous company, and her presence toned down and ameliorated the roughness, asperities, and gaucherie of our wild bush life, with the benign and always ennobling influence of feminine society. Her presence amongst us was a real blessing; and although the quick and fortunate Roger

obtained all her sweetest smiles, conversation, and delicate attentions, none of us felt jealous, for it was so evident that her preference for him was *un fait accompli*, that we all somehow came to tacitly admit it as a matter of course Thus, what might otherwise have caused no little trouble and dissension, had two or three of us taken it into our heads to fall in love with our brighter spirit at the same time, was, from the outset, effectually prevented. Mynheer van Meyer, too, seemed perfectly contented with the course events were taking as between his daughter and her lover; but then the matter-of-fact and prudent old Dutchman had first taken care to satisfy himself that my chum had a snug little sum lying to his credit at the Natal Bank. Ever after he looked on complacently at the courtship and flirtation going on between the two. He would smoke his pipe with calm, unruffled satisfaction, puffing and whiffing away, enveloping himself in a dense and meditative cloud, from out of which he eyed them in a pleased, benignant, fatherly sort of way. The course of their true love was to run smooth, there seemed but little doubt of that. Happy pair! Their lot indeed appeared most enviable. The old woman's apothegm of "being made for each other" could not ever have been more happily applied.

Besides the intellectual and moral profit which the fair Carlotta's presence was to all of us, the material man benefited not a little; from daylight to dark she was always busy at something or the other *pro bono publico.* She very practically proved the truth of Roger's assertion that she was no less useful than beautiful. Every day she made sweet new bread for all hands, and insisted on doing it, too, unless the weather happened to be very wet and rainy, in which case we had to fall back upon damper—literally so, after her handiwork—and our own devices. She was not one of your fine ladies, only ornamental, and fit for nothing in creation but to be looked at; she was essentially, heart, soul, mind, and disposition, a woman.

The female character seems somehow more versatile, more naturally refined, than that of man; for take such a woman, with so truly feminine and unblemished a nature, from even a low rank of life, and where, in her own class, would you find a man whose bearing, manners, and appearance could compare with hers?

But wherever are we getting to, digressing thus into physiological and metaphysical theories? That is not the way after Ophir; neither, in truth, was that which our party undertook so practically.

Under female superintendence, our meals became more decent and palatable than they would otherwise have been in the hands of the recreant Thomas. That coloured gentleman would not have worried himself to make us comfortable. Not he! But our fair director-general of the housekeeping—or, rather, camp-keeping—arrangements was never tired of working, of doing all she could to make the life as agreeable as possible.

When I sometimes could not avoid reflecting what an admirable wife she would make, a feeling of keen envy stole upon me. It is not every day that one can meet with such a woman.

Besides being the possessor of such valuable domestic habits and experience, Miss van Meyer was not without more elegant accomplishments. She was a good musician, and, besides being a brilliant performer on the piano and concertina, was the fortunate owner of a rich, full, and glorious contralto voice. Under her guidance, the inharmonious howling and the instrumental discord with which we had been wont to solace our weary moments in the evenings, and astonish the natives, gradually became less uncouth and more melodious. Between her sweet-toned concertina, her brother Wilhelm's cornopean—on which he played very well—Monsieur Louis' cornet, and the flute I had bought in Durban, our *al fresco* concerts became no contemptible performance, the general accompaniment with bones, triangles, and impromptu drum, by the rest of our party, being toned down and moderated, whenever their feelings would not permit them to remain silent listeners.

The day after leaving the quasi diggings near the Tugela, we crossed that river by a ford, at a place where the Government had a ferry-boat stationed. This was a convenience often valuable to travellers on foot or horse, as the river was frequently swollen during the rainy season, and it was, besides, at all times a prudent way of crossing, in consequence of the numerous alligators.

The water was just shallow enough for the waggons to get across without

wetting their contents, and in order to leave them as light as possible we all took advantage of the boat, swimming our horses over two at a time, towed by their bridles astern.

Mynheer had often passed this way before, and expressed surprise at finding a new English ferryman in charge of the native boatmen and station. That functionary explained the disappearance of his predecessor in this way:—

It appeared that some ten months previously a Zulu chief, fleeing from the hostility of Panda, the Zulu king, came to this place, seeking refuge upon British soil, at a time when the river was too high for fording. The treacherous wretch in charge of the ferry, after extorting from the chief all the valuables the latter possessed, promised to ferry him across in the morning, but would not even yield to his earnest entreaties to place his wives and children in safety upon British territory that evening, although told that a party of the fierce Zulu warriors were following in pursuit. This treacherous scoundrel, after permitting his victims to enter and occupy the ferry-house upon the Zulu side, waited until dark, then crossed over with his horse, and in the morning (in the hope of obtaining a reward for his treachery from Panda) brought the pursuing party to the hut. The betrayed chief, on being captured by his enemies, and seeing the white man's vile treachery, exclaimed—

"I thought that the white man was true and noble; that his words were firm and changeless as the hills; that when he promised to protect my wives and little ones they were safer than within triple walls of defence. For myself I feared not. I am a warrior, a chief of chiefs, a Bonguni" (a Zulu of Zulus) "and know how to die. Now I know that the white man is a dog" (*inja*—the greatest word of contempt a Kaffir can use), "a liar, and a treacherous umtwa" (bushman).

Will it be believed? The British ferryman actually snatched an assegai from one of the bystanders, and threw it at the captive chief, transfixing one of his arms.

The noble savage, plucking out the weapon, threw it scornfully to the ground, bared his breast, and said—

"Do not throw spears at me. Take a gun. Here—shoot here!"

Well, the cowardly, abominable dastard absolutely did so, shooting the unfortunate chief dead upon the spot!

We did not hear what became of the women and children, but their fate can easily be imagined.

In this horrible affair the retributive justice of an offended Providence followed swift and signally.

The murder became bruited in the colony, and when the police officers arrived to arrest the ferryman, they came just in time to bury him, for he died in their presence from a fever caught in the Zulu country on the very night when he rode off to betray the chief.

From subsequent inquiry, I satisfied myself as to the absolute truth of this tragic story.

Shortly after crossing the Tugela we nearly met with a serious accident. The road wound along, very narrow, and very broken, at the edge of a deep kloof or precipice, the bottom of which was at least eighty to a hundred feet below.

Our waggon was in the rear, and, suddenly, without any warning whatever, the road broke away beneath its off wheels; the heavy vehicle slowly tilted towards the kloof, until its inner forewheel was off the ground, and the whole thing hung suspended right upon the extreme edge of the steep precipice!

I and the "long Yankee" were at the time laying down inside the waggon, and, when we felt it going, it may easily be imagined with what extreme rapidity we tumbled out.

"Out! Get out!" roared Will; and out I got, being nearest to the box, and down he came, "all anyhow," as he afterwards expressed it, right on top of me.

We were safe now; but unless something had providentially caught the lower wheels, and had thus saved the ponderous and heavily-laden waggon from toppling over, just at the very moment when it hung suspended between earth and air, upon the very verge of the precipice, we should not have had time to escape, and would most assuredly have been dashed to little atoms, together with oxen, goods, waggon and all.

It was a terribly critical position in which our clumsy conveyance was placed. By great good luck the lower wheels had each caught upon a jutting

projection of solid rock, and could not slip any further whilst the line of our centre of gravity remained just within them, and the waggon hung so nicely balanced, at an angle of almost forty-five degrees, that the slightest further cant must inevitably have sent it toppling over down the yawning abyss.

As we dared not use the oxen—there being no room for them to give a side pull, and if once the wheels got clear of the two stones nothing could save the waggon from falling—we unyoked them, and secured the yoke-chain from the side of the vehicle to a stout tree growing upon the inner bank of the road ; we also used a stout rope in the same way.

In spite of the dangerous predicament we were in, Monsieur Louis made us laugh not a little at first, as he went on lamenting, wringing his hands, and exclaiming, "Ach ! ach ! Gott in Himmel ! Der tings vill den all be smashed und do bids ! All mien tings vill smash !" But in a short time all hands were hard at work, and then, by unloading the waggon and digging a deep rut under each of the inside wheels, we managed to right it a little, and then pull it up into safety with the team.

By the time we had repacked all our quantity of stores and varied paraphernalia it was almost dark, so we outspanned for the night at the first convenient camping-place near water.

In the bush near by we came upon a small party of Bushmen, whose only shelter was a wretched little den made of thatch and rush. They presented a wild, weird, and hideous aspect, as seen beneath the pale rays of the moon gleaming through the trees, and as they were fitfully illumined by the redly glowing flashes of their fire. These wretched outcasts of humanity were crouched around the blazing sticks, eagerly awaiting the meal cooking, hermetically sealed up in a huge clay pot. Not unlike the South Sea Islander—whose full-dress costume is a cocked hat and a pair of sea-boots—their clothing consisted of pieces of cloth wound round their heads, and, here and there, some wore hide sandals strapped upon their feet. The poor creatures were revoltingly ugly, but their women ! Well, we asked to see them, but when they crawled forth from the wretched hut we were very glad to let them go back again.

The country hereabouts, along the eastern bank of the Buffalo River,



THE BUSHMEN'S CAMP.

was very rocky, barren, and uncultivated, and only supported a few scanty families of Bushmen.

Early in the morning, when we prepared to *trek* away from this place, I was attracted to the spot we had visited the previous evening, by hearing a strange, buzzing, humming sort of sound, like the noise of a Jew's-harp, proceeding therefrom. Upon going to ascertain the cause, I saw one of the Bushmen sitting playing upon an extraordinary sort of musical instrument—a bow, with a little hollow gourd shell, into which he blew, upon one end of the string. I cannot remember the name by which the thing was called, but the noise thereof was for all the world exactly like that of the Hebrew lyre aforesaid.



THE BUSHMAN MUSICIAN.

CHAPTER VIII.

We Travel due North—Bushmen: the Life they Lead—An Alarm, and an Adventure with an Extraordinary Electric Fish—Combat between a Leopard and an Ant-bear—A Fever Country—Reach Higher and more Healthy Land: Its Scenery, Game, and Non-auriferous Formation—Alligators and Hippopotami at the Pongolo River—We try a Hippopotamus Steak, and an Alligator trys to obtain a Beefsteak.

AS nearly as possible we kept travelling on a due north course, which, from the point where we crossed the boundary of Natal at the Tugela River, would take us direct to the village or township of Lijdenburg, a distance of 260 miles, on the extreme eastern frontier of the Transvaal Republic, in latitude 24° 25′ S.

We were now in the independent territories of the large and powerful Kaffir tribe known as the Amazulus, having crossed to the eastern side of the Buffalo River two days after leaving the Tugela.

During the first sixty or seventy miles of our advance into this little known country, however, we scarcely met with a dozen Kaffirs, and those were only travelling towards Natal. The only inhabitants seemed to be Bushmen, and they, poor wretches, led the lives of wolves and foxes, hiding in the caves and holes, the few patches of dense and almost impenetrable jungle scattered here and there amongst the jagged, nearly inaccessible rocks and mountains of this inhospitable region. The reason they were driven to this dodging, hiding, and wild-beast sort of existence was explained to us—through our native servants, for none of us, not even the Van Meyers, who had been all their lives in South-East Africa, could understand a single word of the harsh, guttural, hissing language they spoke—by a large party of Bushmen whom we surprised one day in the middle of a thicket cooking their dinners.

They told us that the Kaffirs, whenever a meeting of the two races took place, carried them off and made them work as slaves, assegaing or shooting them down if they attempted to run away. Poor wretches! Theirs was not

an enviable sort of life. I cannot but consider them the lowest in the human scale, even beneath the degraded aborigine of Australia. They do not seem to have the most remote conception of any religious ideas, no ceremony of marriage, or, indeed, anything else. If a man fancies a woman he takes her, leaves her when she no longer finds favour in his eyes, and looks out for another. Besides this I have reason to believe that a community of interest in wives as well as everything else, exists amongst them.

All this district was of the same geological formation as the auriferous



THE BUSHMAN'S FEAST.

spots in Natal, yet nowhere could we obtain a particle of the precious metal. As the road was pretty good, we were enabled to travel at the rate of nearly twenty miles a day, so soon left the haunts of the wretched Bushmen far behind, who, I fancy, are maligned, when it is stated that they use poisoned arrows, for those whom we met were quite ignorant of any such chemical art, though the unpleasantly jagged arrow-heads they used would most undoubtedly inflict very rankling and unhealthy wounds.

From the primary geological formation and the sterile region we

emerged into a thickly-wooded country, of an alluvial and secondary constitution, where rich loam and "drift" rested upon a bed of shale, sandstone, and limestone. During the last sixty or seventy miles we had not crossed a single stream of any importance, but were now continually coming upon the tributaries and scattered sources of the Umvolosi River. At the main branch of this stream, called the Umvolosi Emhlope—the White Umvolosi—a very singular piscatory adventure happened to one of our party and the sable Thomas.

We had just outspanned for breakfast by the side of this stream, and Thomas had gone down to fill the kettle with water—down he certainly did go, for, startled by the terrific yell to which he suddenly gave utterance, we all looked after him, and saw kettle and buckets flying in one direction whilst he went in another, and fell flat upon his face, just as though he had been shot.

"Take to your arms, mien boys!" shouted Mr. van Meyer, in a sharp and commanding voice. "Perhaps some Kaffirs have been shoot the man with assegais."

And the hardy old Boer, long since inured to the sudden attacks, surprises, and bush-fighting of native warfare, was ready for the fray, with his formidable roer poised, and his finger on the trigger.

In the meanwhile the extraordinary conduct of our Ganymede continued to alarm us. He remained flat on the ground, moving his legs and arms convulsively, just as though he really had been shot, but at the same time continuing to vociferate yell after yell of the most appalling nature, in a way that no shot person ever did.

Gun in hand, revolver in belt, and keenly scrutinising every surrounding bush in the distance, we moved forward in martial array to where the unfortunate Thomas laid howling.

No blood was to be seen about him, no assegai sticking up from a deadly wound. We turned him over, rolled him about, stripped off his shirt and trousers, but could not perceive the slightest indication of any injury. We questioned him, but in vain, as he did nothing but continue to yell and howl for at least a quarter of an hour. At the end of that time we managed

to elicit some reply. In answer to our reiterated queries he at length sat up, rolled his eyes wildly about, and then, pointing to a little pool of water near by, and hugging one of his feet with both his hands, as though it were in pain, said—

"De debbil! De debbil, massa! De debbil kotch me by de leg in dat amanzi" (water)!

It was long before we could elicit any further information from him, but at last, after no little trouble, managed to ascertain that something had either struck or seized hold of his leg or foot with such violence, when he trod in that little pool, as to knock him down.

More than this it was impossible to discover, as he preferred rolling on the ground and groaning away—

"Miningi qaqamba! miningi qaqamba! mina feele" (Too much pain! too much pain! I am dying)!

With the inquisitiveness for which his compatriots are famous, our "long Yankee" was the first who thought of going to examine and investigate the little pool and its contents, in order to ascertain whether the mystery could by any natural causes be elucidated.

He went off from the circle round about the unhappy Thomas very quietly, and without saying a word of his intention to any one, intending, no doubt, alone and unaided, to achieve whatever honour and glory might result from possible discoveries.

Several of us followed him. We saw him gazing intently into the pool, and had just sauntered up to his side, when he suddenly darted down, bending his long and angular frame into an acute angle, and plunged his right hand into the water, drawing it forth in triumph, with a largish flat fish.

At the very instant this occurred he was in the act of turning to us exultingly, and had just ejaculated "Here it is! Here's de debbil!" when he dropped the fish, with a loud yell, only slightly less terrific and appalling than that with which our sable servitor had first alarmed us, and cried—

"An electric fish, by Je-hoshaphat!"

In a moment all hands were clustered around, and then, sure enough, whoever dared to touch that fish obtained practical proof of its electric

powers. The scared Thomas had, no doubt, trodden upon it with his bare foot, and the shock, from what we experienced by merely just touching its back with the tip of a finger, was so violent as to knock him down.

After sticking a knife through the back of its neck, and doing the strange thing to death, it was carefully examined, and found to be a flat, kite-shaped fish, about two inches thick, a foot broad, and eighteen inches long; in general form and appearance not unlike a young skate, only possessing a particularly forbidding and disagreeable look. It had not any scales, was of a dirty light brown colour on the back, speckled over with small greyish spots, and was of a dingy pale yellow underneath.

This was the first and last specimen of this extraordinary species of fish that we ever came across, and I believe that it is very uncommon, for, although we repeatedly inquired about it from the natives, and kept the skin to show for some days, not one could recognise the monster, and they all declared, with a most refreshing unanimity, that the thing was *kulu targarti*—the comfortable way in which they always account for everything that they cannot understand.

That extraordinary fish is a dangerous customer, for I have no doubt that were a person to touch one in crossing a river, he would receive an electric shock so powerful as to paralyse and disable him, when the generally strong current in these parts would carry him away as food for finny things and sauria.

Only a few days subsequent to this peculiar adventure we experienced another, equally unusual and unique, by encountering, also for the first and last time, one of Nature's curiosities—one of those strange and secretly-living animals which man can seldom see.

The country had now become thickly covered with a dense and luxurious vegetation, and as our expedition went winding along what was facetiously spoken of as a road, between some thick jungle, we were surprised to hear a most extraordinary noise proceeding from a little glade which penetrated the bush on our right-hand side.

This singular sound, which made us halt in wonder, resembled the confused grunting of a pig, the suppressed growling of a tiger, and the



COMBAT BETWEEN THE ANT-BEAR AND THE LEOPARD.

worrying noise of a dog, interrupted with loud squeakings, snarlings, and sudden roars; besides which, we could hear a tearing and struggling, a rustling of grass and a crackling of twigs, as though some large animals were rolling and tumbling about in a violent manner.

With gun or rifle in hand, we all crept stealthily along the little glade, until, at its termination, amidst an almost impenetrable walling in and arching over of umbrageous vegetation, we saw two large animals struggling, and plunging, and tearing each other, and rolling over and over, locked together in deadly combat.

By remaining under shelter of the brushwood, our presence failed to distract the combatants from their fierce conflict, and we were soon enabled to perceive that one of them was a large leopard; but it was some little time before we could make out the genus of the other beast. All that we could see of it, as the two kept turning one over the other, and changing about, now uppermost, now beneath, in their rapid struggles and contorted evolutions, was a long horn-shaped head, tremendous claws, a huge bushy tail, and a coat of shaggy fur.

We were too much interested by this strange forest fight to think of interrupting it, and continued to gaze in silence, only wondering what sort of an antagonist the feline brute had got.

Soon, however, it became evident that the latter would prove victorious. The struggles of his enemy became weaker and weaker; he succeeded in getting fairly within its guard, and, getting a deadly bite upon its throat with his formidable fangs, pinned it helplessly to the ground. Then we were able to discover that the yielding monster was a huge ant-bear of the largest species.

The unfortunate brute was almost powerless now, as it laid upon its back with the leopard planted firmly above it, tearing away at its throat, and could do no more than grasp its formidable assailant round the body with its shaggy legs, whilst unable to use its sharp, long claws with any considerable effect.

The grunting noise, and the fiercer squeaking, became fainter and more feeble, whilst the muttered, gnawing sort of growling seemed to rise and swell

with triumph; then the voice of the beaten ant-bear died away altogether, and the spotted conqueror, shaking himself clear, gave one thundering roar of victory—but it was his last. Even as he rose in his pride to triumph over his dead antagonist, our rifles were levelled, and that resounding roar changed to a dismal howl, as he rolled over by its side in the agonies of death.

Upon measuring the leopard, we found that its length, from the tip of its nose to the end of its tail, was just seven feet and an inch. In the same way, the ant-bear measured seven feet and a half, but then it was much smaller in the body than its enemy. On each foot it had four powerful claws, six inches long, and these, together with the tremendous horn into which its head extended, were the tools with which Nature had so well supplied it for the purpose of burrowing into the earth to obtain its food—the large white ant. We never chanced to fall in with another of these singular animals, for it is of shy and secret habits, and is supposed never to come forth from its burrow in the earth except at night.

After crossing the Umvolosi Umnyama, or Black Umvolosi River, at a point about 100 miles from where we left Natal, our course laid through a low bush country—a deep wide valley, running between the Bomba Hills on the east and the Drakensberg on the west. It was now the South African midsummer (December of 1868), and, what with the excessive heat during the day, the dampness and moisture of the heavy dews at night, and the miasma rising from the tangled masses of damp and dripping vegetation, several of our party suffered from fever, including Tom Ashwell, Monsieur Louis, and our beneficent goddess, the fair Carlotta. Fortunately, by the strenuous application of quinine, and a careful attention to diet, the sufferers soon recovered, though our young Teutonic friend, at one time, became dangerously ill. This part of the country is undoubtedly very unhealthy; and only the higher ridges, which rise up here and there, as spurs from the mountain ranges on either side, are inhabited by the natives. I pity any European who may venture through this district without a comfortable—for Africa, that is—waggon, a strong team, and a good supply of food and medicines; without these luxuries or necessities, they would surely succumb to jungle fever.

It was almost pathetic to observe the anxious glances many members of

our party kept casting upon Mynheer van Meyer's cap-tent waggon during the few days our fair companion was confined to her bed within its recesses. Perhaps some of them missed the nice hot scones in the morning; but all, I am sure, felt not a little anxiety until she once more appeared among us, gay, charming, affable, and serviceable as ever, though slightly thinner and paler, for that same African malady is a deadly and insidious foe—an active agent of the pale grim mower.

After a weary passage of eight days through this low-lying, unhealthy bush region—the happy home of numerous venomous snakes and bloated pythons alone—we rose to higher land, where, murmuring amidst many a flowery dell upon the sides of undulating hills and strange fantastic table-shaped but rugged ridges, flowed the many branches of the Usuto, Pongolo, or Maputa Rivers.

The Maputa is one of the few large rivers on this coast, and possesses that name as far inland as the Bomba Hills, after which it divides into a fork of two main branches—that to the north, known as the Usuto; that to the south, as the Pongolo.

The country now seemed healthy, and fit for man and beast. Numerous kraals studded the surrounding hills and every undulation rising above the plains; whilst game of every sort began to be very plentiful. The low bush, common to the coast of Natal, began to be replaced by clumps and stretches of thicket, containing numerous tall and good-sized trees, which was a pleasant sight after the stunted, dwarfed sort of exogenous vegetation to which we had so long been accustomed; and I began to hope that the day was not far distant when we might expect to see those giants of the vegetable kingdom, those wonder-inspiring subjects to the naturalist and philosopher, the mighty baobab.

We were now getting into those latitudes marked as Ophir, Sofala, or Monomotapa, by the ancient geographers; but, although not a stream nor rock escaped our close scrutiny, neither sign nor vestige of the gold could we find out as yet. It was the wrong formation altogether in which to expect the precious metals. The Bomba Hills, at a general distance of ten or twelve miles to our right, were composed almost entirely of sandstone, though

of an apparently calcined or crystallised description, with, no less curiously than occasionally, sometimes erratic blocks, anon a superincumbent capping of a fine-grained blue trap. The same formation, without any trace of quartz, granite, or other volcanic rock, continued towards the Drakensberg.

What with the welcome sight of heavier timber dotted here and there in thickets of luxurious growth, the brilliant verdure of the rich and emerald-tinted sward, and the strange-looking ribbed and terraced hills, the scenery was very picturesque; and our out-door life extremely enjoyable.

Besides the ordinary African partridge, the woods contained wild pigeons and numerous large pheasants, almost black in colour, and quite unlike any we had ever seen before. Antelope, oribe, the large bush buck, with occasional hartebeest, koodo, and eland stragglers, were nearly always to be obtained by an early morning hunt near the watercourses, so that we were seldom without fresh meat. Alligators, or crocodiles, of a large size, began to get numerous, so that we were obliged to be cautious in crossing the larger rivers. But it was at the Pongolo that we saw the first hippopotami.

Arriving at this river about the middle of a broiling hot day, whilst the waggons were outspanned to give the oxen a good long rest, so that we might take advantage of the moonlight for a *trek* forward in the night, Roger, Wilhelm van Meyer, the "long Yankee," Monsieur Louis, and myself rode down to the water, intending to have a bathe.

The first thing, however, that met our gaze was a party of some twenty huge alligators, stretching their hideous and unwieldy bodies and basking themselves in the sun upon a sand-bank in the middle of the river.

"Wal, boys," said the "long Yankee," reflectively, when he saw these formidable strangers, "I reckon the water hereabouts don't suit this child—too many man-eaters in occupation. Let us see if we can find a quiet pool along the bank."

Agreeing to this proposition, we rode some distance by the edge of the river, and succeeded, at last, in finding a pool, though unfortunately not a quiet one.

Arriving at some marshy ground, fringed with small clumps, some twelve feet high, of the graceful papyrus rush, waving their feathery heads in the

gentle breeze, we detected the gleam of water between the stems, and went towards it in high hopes of obtaining a cold, refreshing bath. Soon, however, we were doomed to disappointment. As we neared the water, a loud splashing, blowing, and snorting, warned us that something was already in possession. After some difficulty in forcing our way through the strong reeds and rushes, we came within view of just the sort of cool, secluded pool that we were looking for, but saw also, disporting themselves in the water, a herd of about a dozen hippopotami. There seemed to be a whole family of these immense, ugly, and ungainly amphibious monsters, from a little cub, crossing on its mother's back, to an enormous brute—no doubt the venerable father of the flock—who stood upon terra-firma, snuffing up the gale, glancing with his fierce little pig-like eyes in our direction, champing and displaying his formidable gleaming white tusks, and conducting himself in a suspicious, not to say threatening manner, having, probably, already detected our unwelcome and intrusive presence.

"Ach! Dere is den der hibbobotami!" cried our friend Louis, putting spurs to his horse, and making back tracks for the waggon. "Kom on, or dey vill eat us all up."

Bathing was a difficulty in these latitudes, that was evident.

Before, however, following our comrade, the rest of us unslung our rifles, took careful aim, and fired at the head of a fine young calf taking it easy and lying down behind his venerable parent.

Then I set the prudent example of retiring to a safer and more respectful distance, for, once before, on the Mozambique coast, I had been attacked by a herd of hippopotami, and had had a narrow escape of my life, so did not feel any particular desire to get to close quarters with the brutes again.

Wilhelm, however, better understanding, I suppose, the nature of those who lived in these parts, manfully stood his ground, and called after us—

"Come back! Come back! Do not be afraid; they'll all run away directly."

Sure enough, when we returned at his command, we found that all the

unwieldy brutes had vanished in the water, excepting only the largest of the lot.

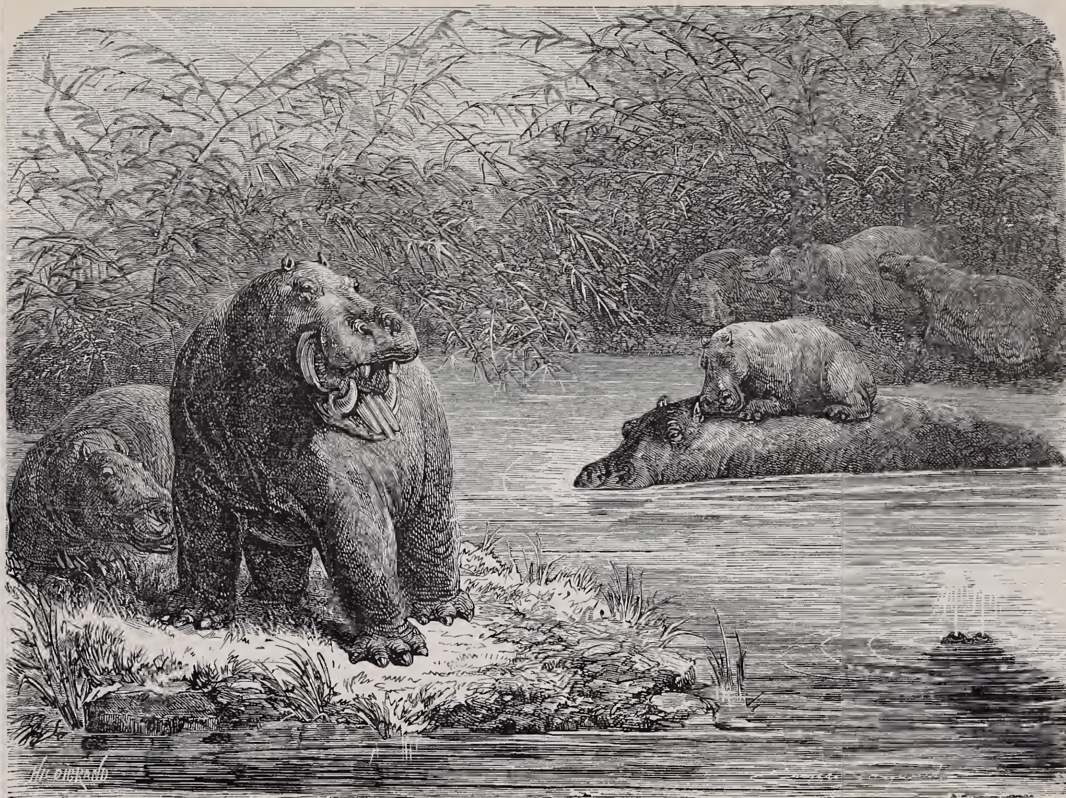
Perhaps salt water, in which my previous encounter took place, makes these animals fiercer.

Slowly and awkwardly moving his huge head from side to side, to look first in our direction, and then to sniff at his dead darling, the remaining monster then followed his prudent relatives, by shuffling with giant clumsiness into the water, and sending volumes of spray high into the air, as he sank down sullenly and slowly out of sight.

We found, by the large round hole in the centre of its forehead, that the calf had been killed by the ball from Wilhelm's heavy roer, throwing bullets weighing eight to the pound, and about the most effective weapon one could have for such heavy game ; the smooth bore, in such cases, far excelling the rifle, as the large and heavy spherical ball crushes its way where the lighter and elongated projectile either drills a clean small hole, or glances at the least resistance. In fact, we found in this instance that the shots from the Snider rifles of Roger, the "long Yankee," and myself had all glanced off the dead animal's tough skin and thick skull, merely leaving some slight scores or grooves where they had struck.

By way of a change, that day, and upon my recommendation—for I remembered the zest with which I and my former comrades had enjoyed the unusual substitute for "salt junk" after that adventure on the Mozambique coast—we dined off hippopotamus steak. It was not much relished, however, and we did not care to try it again ; but then the dark-coloured, coarse, and peculiarly flavoured flesh—a little more beef than fowl, and a little more fish than beef—though pretty tender, and fairly succulent, could not be compared with the sweet wild-fowl and delicious venison we generally had at table.

At this time it became necessary for us to observe caution in our progress through the country, especially when straggling from the main body, as all sorts of fierce wild animals—heavy game and beasts of prey—began to increase upon the land, whilst the rivers swarmed with crocodiles and hippcpotami.



HIPPOPOTAMI ON THE PONGOLO.



AN ALLIGATOR TRYING TO SEIZE ONE OF OUR OXEN.

It was only a few moments after we had shot the young calf that an alligator daringly tried to seize one of our oxen as they were driven down to drink at the Pongolo by our driver. This voracious saurian wished to dine off a leg of beef—a leg of our beef! Fancy his audacity! I am only sorry to think that none of us were there with our rifles, to reciprocate as he deserved.

CHAPTER IX.

The Zulu Country and its Three Tribes—Arrival at an important Kraal—A Knobkerrie Dance—Ketchwayo, Heir-apparent to the Zulu Throne—An Interview and an Oratorical Display with that Chief—He lays an Embargo on our Progress—Physiology of the Kaffirs—Native Women—Shlekashlekar—Head-dress *à la Umbabazo*—Kaffir Music—Who are the Kaffirs?—Suggestions as to their Race and Origin—Reasons against Hereditary Transformation of Species—Ethnological Division, including Kaffirs.

We were now in the very heart of the Zulu country proper, namely, the northern part of the lands occupied by the first, original, and most important of the three tribes into which the "fierce Zulus" are divided.

The three divisions are known as the Amazulus, Amatongas, and Amaswarzis. It was through the territories of the first of these that we were now passing. So far as we were able to observe, these three tribes were perfectly identical in race, origin, and appearance. In fact, we found that both the Amazulu and the Amaswarzi called himself a Zulu; and I believe that it is the same with the Amatonga, though we did not visit the country of the latter, which embraces all that tract between the sea-coast and the Bomba Hills. Zulu seems to be the generic term for all; the other two tribes being merely branches of the same stem.

Panda, the old king of the Amazulus, rules the three powerful divisions wisely, and in perfect harmony. This venerable chief is, however, getting very old and feeble, and his prolonged rule is now actually maintained by his able son, Ketchwayo, who must be at least forty-five years of age.

The extent of country occupied by the Zulus is very considerable, extending from the Sabia River in the north, in latitude 24° S., to the frontier of Natal, the Tugela River, in the south, in latitude 29° S.; or a length of 300 miles, with an average breadth of about 150 miles, from the sea-coast to the Drakensberg Mountains.

Shortly after crossing the Pongolo we came upon the largest and most

extensive native village that we had yet fallen in with. A messenger was sent to us from the chief, requesting us to halt until he had ascertained the nature of our visit to his territories. In the meanwhile, as that black high mightiness was not ready to receive our deputation, we passed the time by gazing at a number of warriors who were going through the performance of a sort of knobkerrie war-dance at a little distance from the kraal.



A KNOBKERRIE DANCE.

Summoned, at length, to an audience with the great black man, we were surprised to find him no less a personage than the famed Ketchwayo, heir-apparent to the Zulu throne.

We found him seated at a sunny spot upon the green sward, outside the village, and surrounded by his wise men and councillors—solemn old niggers these, with snowy wool upon the summit of their craniums, and woolly-white patches upon their lips and chins. All were squatted on their hams, and all tried hard to preserve a grave, not to say reverend and important demeanour. These old gentlemen, however, were not very respectable in their appearance ;

in fact, considered as a cabinet council, they would not have failed to excite the merriment of us occidental strangers, had we not known that the life and



KETCHWAYO.

death, the ready assegais and willing right hands of many thousands of the fierce Zulu warriors, but hung upon their beck and call.

By far the most distinguished member of this rather barbaric council was the chief, Ketchwayo himself. He was a powerful, well-made man, at least six feet high, and possessed an extremely intelligent countenance, with

very well-formed features, containing but little of the negro type. There was a thoughtful, intelligent character in the expression of his face; whilst all his actions and movements were dignified and noble, if not majestic. At all events, there was that nameless air of majesty and freedom one sometimes meets with in the free, independent, untrammelled, and unsophisticated savage. However, one of his principal recommendations to our favourable consideration was the fact that he wore a clean blanket, a thing of which his councillors, his braves, and all his people were perfectly and unanimously innocent.

The art of wearing a *kross* (made of skins) or blanket *à la Kaffir* is very simple. A string is tied loosely round the neck, one end of the blanket is pulled through this at discretion, so as to form a short collar or a long cape, and the rest of the article hangs round about the wearer in graceful or ungraceful folds, according to opinion.

"What"—said Ketchwayo, addressing us through his *umlomobuto*, or mouthpiece, according to Kaffir etiquette, for he was too great a chief to speak direct with unimportant strangers—"what do you want?"

"Noluto" (nothing), we replied, or rather I did, being deputed spokesman by my companions, as I had picked up more of the native language than they had, and the Van Meyers, though well versed in the Cape or old colony dialects, could not understand Zulu. "We came to see what you, the chief, wanted with us."

"Are you traders?" repeated the umlomobuto.

"No."

"Umfundizi" (missionaries)?

"No."

"Soldiers?"

"No."

"Then what are you?" cried the mouthpiece, in irritable tones, having exhausted his knowledge of the callings and classes of the white man.

"Travellers," said I, thinking there could not be any harm in that, and being anxious to conceal the real object of our journey; but I soon found out the mistake I had made.

"What!" cried Ketchwayo himself, abandoning the state formality of umlomobuto, and rising to his full height, in an energetic attitude "Travellers! Have the hills and plains of the 'southern garden'" (Natal) "become too small for your people? Do they covet more of our lands? Are you spies of the white Government, come to pry out the best and most fertile parts of our country?"

The chief paused, his eyes flashing, and his fine form dilating with passion, amid the applauding, guttural, and emphatic "um-ums" of the surrounding braves and sages.

"No!" said I, indignantly, stretching myself up, in my turn, and striving to wax eloquent in the little I knew of the Zulu tongue. "We are not spies; are not agents of the Natal Government; and are not even inhabitants of that country. We come from the empire of the Great White Queen beyond the big water. We have come to see the Kaffirs, the far-famed Zulus, the people of these lands; we have come as friends, as messengers of peace. We wish to see your people, your warriors, your sages, and then return to tell our countrymen what we have seen; how well it will be to become friends and allies with the powerful Zulus; to send plenty of guns, powder, beads, and bracelets, and trade with them for ivory, hides, and ostrich feathers."

"It is well," said Ketchwayo, gloomily. "Now the audience is over. But I know the nature of you white men; your plundering propensities; how you seize the lands of those who cannot defend them. But wait, wait a little. I shall be king some day. Now you can retire. You must wait until we hear what says the great chief, Panda, before receiving permission to pass through our country."

As we did not think it exactly prudent to continue on our way after this intimation, when, in all probability, a free permission would be brought back by the runners Ketchwayo despatched on the moment to his father, who was known to be friendly to all white men, we outspanned about a mile from the village, and awaited the result.

In the meanwhile we may as well say a few words and make a few remarks about the interesting natives amongst whom we were sojourning.

The whole Kaffir race is a fine one, and the Zulus are the very pick

of it, both in figure, face, intelligence, and habits. Excepting only the Abyssinians and, perhaps, the light-complexioned Hottentots, they may fairly rank as the best variety of or mixture with the negro race. Instead of the short dingy wool of the genuine equatorial type, the Kaffir's hair grows to a length of about five or six inches, in stiff corkscrew curls, and generally possesses a faint yellowish hue that is by no means unpleasing. This same tawny tinge, or a more sanguine ruddy substitute, pervades their whole complexion, giving it a glowing richness of colour and a general healthiness of appearance. The average Kaffir is a tall, lithe, gracefully formed, and muscular man. His average height, I should say, is above that of most Europeans, for I think it not less than five feet eight or nine inches. His skin is of the deep yellowish red brown already mentioned. The facial angle and peculiar type of the negro is considerably moderated, the nose being well formed, though flattish, but not extremely so; the lips not grossly large; mouth not particularly capacious; chin and jaws not conspicuously prominent; and the eyes possessing a clear, well-defined iris, and being, as a rule, of a slightly oblique shape, approaching to that peculiar feature of the Mongolian race. The general form of the Kaffir head and face assimilates rather more to the Caucasian than to the negro African, and nearer to the Mongolian than to either. In fact, just as an Arabian or Egyptian admixture is to be detected in the Abyssinian and some other people north of the equator, so, to the south of it, to my mind, the Kaffirs and the Hottentots give strong evidence of bygone connection with the Mongol or Malay.

It is an unpleasant fact that amongst this interesting people the personal appearance of the gentler sex, taken as a whole, is far inferior to that of the men. Of course there are exceptions, and these are so striking, by their intrinsic charms, as not only to prove the rule but explain its cause.

I think I am safe in making the assertion that wherever the female form is found deficient in beauty to the male, it is to be accounted for by the fact that the women of that country are subjected to labour, treatment, or general employment for which Nature never intended them; and I consider this the cause of that rule by which, amongst the lowest races of mankind, the face

and physique of the woman seems inferior. As I have observed among the Kaffirs, so have other travellers in other parts of the world noticed the striking individual charms of some few females where most are ugly, and where their status is low; it may nearly always be found that in such cases the examples either are or have been exempt from the operation of those causes to which I have ascribed the deterioration of their less fortunate and less favoured sisters. Such individuals are mostly the daughters of chiefs, favourite wives, or objects of superstitious and religious veneration. The very young women, also, usually receive a higher tribute of praise than the mere difference caused by a few years alone could possibly warrant. What I have observed of Kaffir habits and physiology—besides having studied the subject in various parts of Asia, America, Europe, and Australia—explains all this, to my belief, upon very natural grounds.

Some of the girls and young women—those whose whole duty has, as yet, been confined to getting fat and comely in the eyes of braves with plenty of cattle wherewith to purchase wives—some, I say, of these eligible young damsels possess a figure of exquisite proportions, robust plumpness, and lithe gracefulness, such as it would be vain to try and match in the haunts of civilisation; and their features are often softly chiselled and expressive, sometimes even delicate and beautiful, according to our notions. As a rule these sable Venuses all incline to *embonpoint;* but the free wild life they lead, the rambling over and climbing their native hills, the incessant out-door exercise, makes them remarkably strong, active, and firmly developed.

These dusky belles are terrible coquettes, and it is an interesting spectacle to see the killing way in which, either at an umjardu or their frequent festive dances, they make war upon the young braves' hearts. What with their bright, roguish eyes, warm, ruddy complexion, easy graceful carriage; and the full sweeping contour of their form, their charms are by no means contemptible, and might even be considered attractive by Europeans, were it not for the reeking streams of rancid and half-churned butter with which they delight to anoint their shining skin and irrigate their short dusky tresses.

It at first seems singular that, despite the total absence of religious

principle or moral code among them, despite, too, their busy spirit of flirtation, they are singularly virtuous. This, however, may be partially accounted for from far other than motives of morality. These ebon-tinted damsels have but faint and vague notions of propriety and virtue; but, then, they each possess a considerable commercial value. This is so impressed upon their minds from childhood; any frailty (which destroys their value) is so severely punished, and they are so closely watched and looked after by their male relatives, as well as by the old women of the *kraal*, that any secret amour becomes a matter of great difficulty, and would almost certainly be found out. Besides this, the sentiments of these dark young ladies are so carefully trained that in most cases they would themselves be the first to inform their relatives should any inamorato dare to do them wrong. In such an event, the love-sick and imprudent Sambo has to cry *peccavi*, and either surrender many cows, wherewith to assuage the damsel's outraged innocence and feelings, or else pay up her price in fine fat oxen, like a man, and marry her.

The happiest period of a Kaffir woman's life is in her early youth, previous to marriage. No sooner have the cattle constituting her commercial equivalent been duly handed over to her affectionate father or next friend, than she bids a long and lasting farewell to happiness and freedom. She takes up her abode at the *kraal* of her husband, who, if rich enough in wives and oxen, establishes her in a little beehive hut of her own, otherwise she has to put up with sharing the one hut, bed (a mat on the ground), and board of her *indoda* with his other connubial companions. Then, with them, she has to till and labour in his fields, to provide the lordly savage, his progeny, and themselves with food; he, in the meanwhile, taking his ease, eating, lolling, and sleeping the weary hours away, or strutting about with shield and *assegais*, done up in his war paint. Many a time has it somewhat increased the circulation of this Anglo-Saxon's blood to see one of those freshly oiled and painted quasi warriors marching along at his ease, followed by several of his wretched wives, laden, staggering and toiling away like beasts of burden, under heavy loads. A few short years of married life seems sufficient to spoil the beauty of the handsomest Kaffir girl; and, although some of their

peculiar habits—similar to certain rules and customs of the Hebrews—should, one would think, tend to preserve their pristine form and vigour, the result of the unfeminine life they lead is that they soon become coarse, heavy, and masculine, even before middle age, after which their appearance is blear, shrunken, and disgusting.

From this degeneration we must, of course, except the favoured few



SHLEKASHLEKAR.

already referred to, the wives and daughters of the chiefs. As pre-eminent amongst this select circle, so far as came under my own observation, I must award the palm to Ketchwayo's favourite wife, the young and beautiful Shlekashlekar. This charming dusky beauty was not alone admired for her fine face and form, but for her courageous disposition, which made her the

companion of her warlike lord and master in all his military exploits and forays. She was a regular Amazon, and could wield both *assegai* and *knobkerrie* as deftly as any of the warriors. Her usual dress was a softly-dressed *kross* of tiger skin, with a ring through her nose, earrings, chains of the finest beads wound round her neck, and a peculiar kind of head-dress, constructed with her own hair, which was plaited and formed into a ridged coronet, *à la Zulu proper.* But, far more than all this, it was the beaming intelligence, the strikingly intellectual expression of her fine features which, to my mind, constituted her principal charm. She was a fit companion for a savage chief.

As for the national costume of the Kaffirs, I should call it a simple undress. In cold weather, and sometimes at the European settlements, natives of either sex may be seen with either a blanket or a *kross* of pliable skin slung jauntily over the right shoulder; but other garments have they none, except, indeed, in the case of "station Kaffirs" or missionary converts. It is highly amusing to see the ludicrous air of dignity with which these latter strut about in any cast-off rags which may be given to them by their pastors, and they have a most admirable unconsciousness the while of any mirth their scarecrow appearance may excite. The dressing of his hair occupies a not inconsiderable portion of a Kaffir's life. Often have I seen a strapping young giant squatted on his hams a whole morning, with a comrade busily employed curling up, plastering, and adjusting each individual lock of the numberless corkscrews covering his head. There are many distinct styles of wearing the wool. When a man is married he is termed an *indoda,* and becomes entitled to the not very enviable, and I should venture to opine, rather uncomfortable dignity of "saucepan," that is, a plan of plastering the hair on end with beeswax, so as to form a perfect hollow cone, standing up five or six inches all around; the crown of the head, in the interior, being shaven. A much affected style with unmarried braves is the *umbabazo.* This mode is to gather up the whole of the wool, plaster it stiffly together, and mould it into the shape of a huge fan, facing to the front, and rising up from ear to ear, right across the top of the head. These modes are very dirty, being permanent, and water is religiously excluded from vicinity to the woolly fabric; so that the unfortunate wearer thereof can never either wash,

dress, or comb his head, so long as he remains a martyr to the fashion Kaffir doctors and young maidens are the only ones who wear their hair



UMBABAZO STYLE OF HEAD-DRESS.

naturally, as they straighten out the corkscrew curls, and wear them hanging about their necks, though, unfortunately, all the girls are not so sensible. Worse than all, amongst some of the tribes married women plaster their wool with a thick red pigment, and dress it in a way which resembles nothing in the world but a mop, if you were to open one out, spread the material downwards from a centre, and then dab a potfull of red paint upon it.

Some of the Kaffir children are really pretty little creatures, and have fine eyes, large, lustrous, and jetty black, very different to the muddy and indistinctly defined iris of the genuine negro. They are very docile, very tractable, and very friendly, as a rule, to the *umlungo*, these little darkies; though I have reason to believe that materfamilias teaches them bad metaphysics, and worse theology, in that we, the white people, are looked upon as something very opposite to angels. Yes, they are pretty little things, these savage children, and many a time, at *kraals* in the far interior, I have had naked little urchins run to meet, take me by the hand, and salute me with "Sa-ka bona, inkosi," *i.e.*, "We see you, chief;" equivalent to saying, How do you do, illustrious stranger?"

There is a certain air of freedom, independence, and martial and high-spirited nature about these Kaffirs, very different and far superior to the character of their blacker African brethren. I should pronounce their leading passions to be a proneness to warfare—especially in the way of carrying off other people's good-looking girls and cattle—and a love of dancing. As for their proficiency in music but little can be said in its favour. They have but few musical instruments—a rather pleasing set of reed pipes; a one-stringed guitar-and-Jew's-harp-sounding sort of concern, with a large hollow calabash for a sounding-board; and an extraordinary arrangement of slips of thin wood

over gourd shells, constitute all worth mentioning. It is rather singular that the last of these seems the very prototype of that strange wooden sort of harmonicon which, under the manipulation of a small boy, created quite a *furore* at the late Alfred Mellon's promenade concerts. This peculiar instrument is known to Europeans as the "Kaffir piano." The Kaffir gamut hardly extends beyond a single octave, but yet some of their mournful, wailing, monotone songs are sweet, sadly pleasing, and by no means unmusical. Many a time and oft have I listened, on a still calm night, to the prolonged, quavering, and strangely melancholy notes, as they came wailing, echoing, and trembling through the quiet midnight air. At such times one could hardly believe that these mournful tones of melody, which fancy would so willingly believe were spirit voices breathing forth some tale of love and sorrow from the near-by woods, were indeed but the vocal efforts of some strapping negro walking home to his *kraal*, and singing as he went—as little boys are told to whistle when passing through churchyards—in order not to feel frightened, as well as to keep off evil spirits. This class of singing is entirely falsetto, and, like most of their other operatic endeavours, strictly *à l'improviste* and extemporary. The male voice, in its natural tone, is very powerful and robust, often of a tremendously deep bass that would astonish European singers; the female voice is far more melodious, and is not unfrequently a full rich contralto that it is a pleasure to hear. The exact and accurate time-keeping of the Kaffirs is something really wonderful, and is admirably illustrated by their metrical dancing, as already described in a previous chapter.

CHAPTER X.

Shooting on the Banks of the Pongolo River—A Fracas with the Zulu Hunters—Scenery near the River—Our Rifle Practice Ruse to overcome the Opposition to our Progress—The Natives give a Feast in our Honour—Hut-singing—Monsieur Louis attacked by Bush Pigs—He discovers Vegetable Ivory, and turns Collector thereof—A Perilous Adventure with a large Marmbar—The Death of "Loup."

WHILST waiting for our permit to proceed through the Zulu territories, we at first occupied ourselves by prospecting for gold at all the neighbouring streams. Meeting, however, with nothing but mud, sand, and pebbles for our trouble, we soon gave it up, and formed shooting parties, for the purpose of hunting along the banks of the Pongolo. A thick fringe of mangrove trees grew along the low marshy ground at some parts of the river, and it was with no little difficulty that we sometimes managed to climb along the gnarled and knotted mangrove roots standing high out of the water, bent, contorted, and arching, like the legs of so many leviathan spiders, whilst looking out for wild fowl, ducks, and teal, which we had not tasted for many a long day. It was not until arriving at the Pongolo that we knew these birds existed in this part of Africa, but, under the guidance of an active young Zulu, named Takela, and who professed a great desire to enter our service—although, in reality, he may have been a spy sent by Ketchwayo to try and ascertain something of our actions and intentions—we were led to sundry spots that formed the haunt of numerous wild ducks, and were occasionally rewarded by getting a shot at them. It was seldom, however, that we should have managed to obtain any of the birds, had it not been for the "long Yankee's" dog, "Loup," a splendid Newfoundland, as the natives would not venture into the water for fear of alligators, and we did not care to set them the example, naturally enough concluding that they ought to be better acquainted with the ways and habits of their saurian neighbours than we were. After knocking over a brace of fine fat ducks, it was disheartening to see them go drifting away with the tide, only to fill the capacious maw of the first stray alligator, whilst our prudent Zulu guides stood idly by, exclaiming, in reply



WILD FOWL SHOOTING AT THE PONGOLO.

to our repeated solicitations that one of them would go in and fetch the birds, and then be rewarded with a string of beads—

"Wow! Ma-me! Never mind the beads. Of what use would they be without a leg or arm to put them on? There are alligators who bite men!"

In confutation of this sententious sort of answer we had but little to urge, so, whilst the "long Yankee" and a companion went gunning along the river's bank, accompanied by "Loup," the rest of us either strolled about the country, enjoyed the *otium cum dignitate* of an audience beneath our canvas, stretched upon the emerald sward with any straggling natives who might

with it; if any row with Kaffirs occurred, you might be quite sure that he was in it. He was young and inexperienced, had never travelled before, and, like the youthful bear, had all his sorrows to come.

Upon one occasion, whilst awaiting Panda's dictum, he was very nearly getting us into a serious quarrel with the *braves* of Ketchwayo's *kraal.* It happened in this way. Four of us had joined the warriors, with our rifles, in a grand hunt. Suddenly, in a dense bush, a loud outcry arose, followed by the report of Louis' gun, who next appeared in the open, dragging along an *oribe* in triumph. Soon there came rushing after him, yelling and whooping with wonderful energy and power, the natives who had first set up the outcry. One of these, a stout and respectable-looking warrior, of middle age, proceeded to lay hold of the buck, and was just about to cut it in halves, when Monsieur Louis stood up for what he thought belonged to him alone.

"Der teufel!" he cried. "Vat for der nigger takes hold on mien buck? Vat for der sauvage cut mien buck?"

Then there was a struggle over the carcass, our friend pulling one way and the Kaffir the other. At length, becoming irate, and heedless of the remonstrances of Wilhelm, who had just come up, our young Teuton did a *lutteur* trick, threw the grave and respectable warrior flat upon his back, both shoulders to the ground, in a way that would have delighted the French wrestlers lately performing at the London Agricultural Hall, and proceeded to carry off the prize. Fortunately for him Wilhelm remained behind, and by so doing saved his life; for no sooner did the astounded and enraged warrior regain his feet than he snatched up one of his *assegais,* poised it in the air and in another moment it would have been quivering in the back of our retreating friend, when the sturdy young Boer seized the Kaffir's arm and restrained him.

I and Tom Ashwell then came upon the scene, and found a furious party of *braves* shaking their weapons, execrating all *umlungos,* and just about to

give chase to the offending Louis, on deadly thoughts intent. It was with no little difficulty that we managed to cause a parley, and prevent hostilities; but at length the irresistible temptation of some *umlungo* "fire-water" produced a more pacific sensation, then we proposed an *indarba* (talk or council), in which the mind of the Kaffir taketh huge delight, and for which he is always ready, be the emergency never so imminent. After a long and excited *corroberrie*, in which all the voluble and loud-voiced warriors took occasion to explain their individual views and wishes all together and at the same time, making a din that would probably have aroused the Seven Sleepers, it was agreed that we should form a deputation, consisting of our three selves, the outraged *brave*, with two friends, and proceed to the waggons, to wait upon the offender, and, explaining the time-honoured native game-laws to him, demand the plaintiff's share of the buck.

All fear of hostilities had now been overcome, for we knew the Kaffir's love of red tape, officialdom, and *indarba*, combined with an expectation of sundry glasses of rum, would be amply sufficient to restrain the worst disposition, the most ferocious *feræ naturæ* amongst them, now that the first gust of passion had subsided.

Upon reaching the tents it was explained to Monsieur Louis how that, by the game laws of the country, he who first wounded an animal owned it, and he who killed it was entitled to two legs on one side. The question was thus arranged, and then, to appease the warrior's outraged dignity, the rum was produced, which quite mollified him, converted him into an admirer of his erst assailant, and a friend to all *umlungos* in general, judging by the long-drawn, guttural "ums-ums" he grunted forth, in a tone of huge satisfaction, smacking his lips the while, casting loving but regretful glances upon his glass, and exclaiming, "Umlungo mushle, miningi mushle (the white men are good, very good)!" But I think, if he meant anything, it was that their rum was good.

At a small creek, a tributary to the Pongolo, I came upon the sweetest little spot, the most exquisite little bit of scenery that I had discovered since leaving England—of which, indeed, it strongly reminded me. There were the same emerald-clothed, undulating hills; hard wood trees, not unlike the



VIEW ON A CREEK NEAR THE PONGOLO RIVER.

elm; and with similar small-leaved, dense, bushy, and dark green foliage; with a little murmuring brook gliding and winding about, like a silver thread, in a verdant, shadowy dell below. Here, at this picturesque spot, upon several occasions, I came to have a quiet smoke, and enjoy, whilst reclining dreamily against a mossy bank, its still, soft, meditative solitude.

On the fourth day of our detention at Ketchwayo's kraal the patience of our party became exhausted, and no sign of old King Panda's permission to proceed was forthcoming.

Monsieur Louis advised us to "Kom on mit der vagons und der oxen, und never mind der Kaffiers," but this was not favourably received, as it was scarcely wise to provoke the enmity of a chief who could probably muster something like ten or fifteen thousand armed and savage warriors within the space of a few days. We hit upon a much better plan, or, rather, tried a cunning device, to ensure our freedom of transit, instead of trying to move on without any scheme at all to prevent molestation. We just invited the noble savage, Ketchwayo, and his principal chiefs, to a little bit of rifle practice.

Setting up a target of wood and canvas about eight feet square, we carefully measured off a range of a thousand yards, and one of three hundred, and then, after a few hours' preliminary practice, to get our hand in, we invited the chiefs to come and see some shooting with a new sort of gun.

When Ketchwayo and his head men were all assembled in state and gravity, we commenced operations by Wilhelm, the "long Yankee," and Roger, our three crack shots, firing each a dozen rounds at the thousand yards' range; the natives laughing at, and ridiculing their taking up their stand at this, to them, perfectly ineffective and absurdly great distance, and wittily asking whether they would be good enough to try a shot at the moon afterwards. But the merriment of the mockers soon turned into amazement, when they saw that out of thirty-six shots fired, no less than twenty-two were placed in the target.

It was quite a sight to see the wonderful gesticulation, expressive of surprise, through which those scornful savage elders of the previous moment now went at this performance. Slapping their bare and brawny thighs, throwing up their fists with sudden jerks, and cracking the fingers of each hand in that peculiar way in which the Kaffir gives emphasis to his expressions, the whole assemblage of chiefs and warriors abandoned themselves to the manifestation of their emotions, the air, meanwhile, resounding with the deep bass chorus of their exclamations, "Wow! Ma-me! Bayete!"

—a form of salutation only used to the great chief—"Miningi isazi! Tina mangala! Wow," etc., "Bayete!" (Very clever people! We wonder!)

We made them wonder a little more directly. Our original party of five, each of whom possessed a Snider rifle, now moved up to the 300 yards' range, and after informing the excited natives that we could kill fifty men in the time that they could count a hundred, and having set one of the chiefs to do so in a loud voice, we began blazing away at the target just as fast as ever we could load and fire. Kaffir counting is a longer operation than with us, the words in which they express their figures being so long, and by the time that the chief had finished calling out the number agreed upon we had fired no fewer than fifty-five shots, fifty-three of which were counted in the target, in addition to those already lodged there.

If the previous astonishment of the Zulus was great, their surprise and amazement now became frenetic. Old and venerable warriors, who had not been guilty of a quick movement for many a long day, now forgot their infirmities and dignity, to caper about and gesticulate for a brief space like very lively juveniles. Stout young warriors beat their breasts, cracked together the fingers of first one hand and then the other, jerked quickly but loosely together, and smote their dusky thighs, as though either going out of their minds, or determined to do themselves some grievous bodily harm. Ketchwayo alone stood silent, grave, and thoughtful, his eyes bent upon the ground, and his whole attitude expressive of profound and abstracted meditation.

It was easy to divine the nature of the Zulu chieftain's thoughts. No doubt he was reflecting how impossible it would be for his bare-breasted and *assegai*-armed warriors to cope with such wondrously deadly weapons as those of which we had just displayed the power. Mayhap our idle fancy has been the cause of some great change in the mind of the Kaffir coming man. The Zulus have long looked up to him as the leader who would exterminate the intrusive white man, and restore their own past glories, when the restraint of the wise old King Panda's presence should depart. That Snider rifle display may have altered his intentions.

The loud Wow-wows! Ma-mes! and Bayetes! of the crowd rang echoing

through the air with hoarse reverberation for some time, mingled with the cry, "Vuma, umlungo, vuma! Ku isimangaliso!" (Bravo, white men, bravo! It is wonderful—miraculous!)

But the chief stood silent and thoughtful midst it all. At length, starting from his abstraction, he stepped up to us, seized hold of one of our rifles, and earnestly examined it; but the thing was a mystery to him, he had never seen a breech-loader before. After turning it over and over, and striving in vain to satisfy his curiosity, he appealed to us for explanation.

"How do you load it so quick and fire it so fast? Where is the stick?" (ramrod).

We stated that it did not require one, and showed him a Boxer cartridge, telling him that all he had to do was to insert it in the breech, at the same time opening the same and exposing the chamber, to his no little astonishment.

"It has a door!" he cried. "A door at the very place where it ought to be strongest—a hole where it ought to be solid! But where is the powder? How do you make the bullet go without putting in any gunpowder?"

Then we told him that the powder was contained within the brass cartridge, behind the ball.

"Well, but where is the cap?" he inquired.

We pointed that out.

After thinking a few moments, he asked if there were many such guns in England. "Any quantity," we replied; "izinkulungwaneezishumi" (tens of thousands).

"And your yamabutos" (soldiers) "have them?" pursued he.

Answering this in the affirmative, he made no further inquiries, but the event had evidently made a deep impression on his mind. I am not sure but that we shall be entitled to the thanks and gratitude of Natal's legislative council when old King Panda has departed.

Unable to comprehend the nature of the strange and wonderful, and, to them, new weapons, the crowding throng of councillors and chiefs unanimously declared them to be *umtargati* (bewitched), but Ketchwayo did not seem to think so. His genius, I believe, soars high above that of his people. He

justly attributed the breech-loaders to the superior knowledge of the white man; and his mind became absorbed in contemplation of the utter hopelessness of ever being able to oppose them.

In consideration of the great delight, instruction, and military entertainment we had afforded them, we were treated to a grand feast forthwith. Fatted oxen were killed—and there was almost a fight between the owners thereof as to whose should be put to death and eaten up in honour of the occasion—while much *shimyan* and *jwarlar* was brought forth upon the spot for merry-making of the whole company.

In a short time sundry agonised bellowings told the fate of the horned victims. Then huge fires were made upon the open space in front of the village, over which the hunks of beef were stuck on sticks to—broil, I was going to say; but the truth is that it was only made hot, and eaten so, next to almost raw, whilst I have grave doubts whether the huge masses of flesh outside which the delighted natives managed to place themselves in an incredibly short space of time were warm with fire or with life—to the latter I incline to believe.

That night, inside the huts, we were entertained with what the Kaffirs call "hut singing," which is always performed round the wood fires within their little beehive dwellings, and never out of doors. This very peculiar sort of concert went on at every hut in the *kraal*, and was performed by the men only. Getting close together in a circle round the fire, and squatting down upon their hams, a monotonous um-um-um-um sort of humming constituted the main part of the song; then would come a solitary line with words such as—

"Oh, oh, five, seven umlungos; yes, seven umlungos!"

Then came a formidable chorus, caused by all hands grunting like very hoarse and very loud-lunged pigs, from the bottom of their chests, just so long as ever their breath would last.

Taken altogether, with their gleaming white ivories and rolling eyes, the red flashes of the firelight flickering athwart their dusky, naked forms, and the huge dark shadows playing upon the sides of the little hut around them,

everything combined to make a weird and outlandishly barbaric scene. What would Salvator Rosa have done with such a subject?

At a late hour, leaving the *jwarlar*-overcome warriors to the tender care of their sable spouses, we returned to our waggons. At daylight in the morning we once more inspanned, proceeded on our way due north, bid adieu to Ketchwayo, and heard nothing more about waiting for King Panda's permission : the Snider dodge proved eminently successful.

That unfortunate young Teuton of ours! He was really doomed to trouble and misfortune. Again did some malign influence get him into difficulty. About twelve or fourteen miles beyond Ketchwayo's *kraal* we passed through a piece of thick bush country, on the further verge of which we all had a delicious bathe in a sandy little creek, excepting only our friend Louis, who, having been over persuaded by some sable damsels the preceding night, had imbibed rather more *shimyan* and *jwarlar* than was good for him, and was now sleeping off the effects inside our waggon. Although the halt did not awake him, the noise made at starting did, and upon finding out that we were fresh from a bath, he remained behind to have one. Unlucky young man! No sooner had he disengaged himself from boots, unmentionables, sketch-book, and all—the latter he carried everywhere, and was too much overcome to unsling the night before, so had turned in all standing—than he was set upon and ferociously attacked by a herd of the savage little African wild pigs, a brute not unlike the peccary of America.

Fortunately for him the bough of a neighbouring tree was near at hand, clutching which he scrambled up amongst the foliage, only just in time to save himself from the sharp tusks and teeth of those fierce and pugnacious little porkers.

Alarmed by his loud cries for help, several of us ran back with our rifles to see what was amiss. Upon reaching the creek, and gazing along its bank in the direction whence came the noise, we saw Louis' naked legs sticking out from the top of a tree, and his black little assailants rooting and grunting away beneath. A few shots soon sent the latter scampering away through the woods, all but one—and he, poor pig! having a bullet-hole through his brain, never ran again—and released our friend from his uncomfortable



MONSIEUR LOUIS ATTACKED BY WILD PIGS.

position. He would not remain to try a bathe after this ; but then the rest of our party were not inconsolable, for if Louis lost a bath we obtained some fresh pork. Delicious food we found it too ; and it was the first wild pig that we had tasted in Africa. Ever after we kept a keen look out for any of the victim's brethren who might chance to stray our way, and be unfortunate enough to get within range of our guns.

Our investigating though calamitous friend made a discovery a few days after his adventure with the peccaries. He was always rummaging and ferreting about in search of curiosities and diamonds, and on this occasion

came galloping back to the waggons from a thicket, where he had been prying and naturalising, with several dark brown nuts in his hands, each about two and a half inches thick.

"I say," cried he, breathlessly, with the haste of his ride and the effect of the excitement he was labouring under at his discovery, "what do you call dis tings? Dey kom off from a tree like a cocoa-nut, und dey pese so hard ast von stone."

Upon examining his curiosities, we found that they were vegetable-ivory nuts.

Ever afterwards, as he did with quartz pebbles during our journey to the Umtwālumi, he was in the habit of collecting all the nut-ivory he could come across; and his stock at length began to assume such vast proportions that we were driven to disposing of it over-night, by slyly throwing it away, as we had been compelled to do with his diamond "prospect" in Natal.

About fifty miles beyond Ketchwayo's *kraal*, shortly after crossing the Umkonto, a tributary of the Usuto, or northern branch of the Maputa River, Roger and myself had a perilous adventure with a large *marmbar*.

We were walking along, for exercise, some little distance beyond the waggons, and my old chum was earnestly narrating to me how that he was now a happy man for life—the fair Carlotta having definitely accepted the offer of his heart and hand—when we came to a piece of rocky ground, full of holes and burrows, into some of which we saw several rock-rabbits disappear. Neither of us were carrying our guns, but I had a few *assegais*, in the use of which I was rather expert, having, some years before, been shipwrecked and cast ashore amongst the Arabs, from whom I had learnt to throw the spear. Very fortunately, as it transpired, Roger also carried his revolver in his belt.

Springing after a rock-rabbit that vanished over a little ridge of earth, I saw, shining within a hole facing me from a precisely similar mound, what I took for the rabbit's eyes. In a moment I had plunged an *assegai* at the animal's head, and with such force as to transfix it through and through, driving nearly half a foot of the weapon's blade into the ground.

What was our horror to see, lashing forth with fury from a hole just a couple of feet behind the other, on the other side of the ridge, the huge folds of a black and writhing *marmbar!*

Instead of a rabbit, I had unwittingly transfixed the neck of this deadly snake!

Our lives hung, literally, upon a reed. If the *assegai* should break, and the terrible reptile be able to withdraw its head, there was no escape for us. I had not even time for this reflection, for no sooner had the hideous coils burst forth from the back of the hole than, with a powerful blow from a sweeping and convulsive lash of the wounded monster's tail, I was knocked flat to mother earth.

"Shoot it! Shoot it!" I cried to Roger.

Bang, bang, bang, went his revolver in reply; but three shots were wasted, for he shouted—

"It's no use; I can't hit it. It moves too quick."

And, indeed, the wild blows of the reptile's tail were flying about, beating the earth, and sending the stones and dirt in every direction.

I never for an instant lost my hold upon the shaft of the *assegai*, for our lives depended entirely upon keeping the *marmbar's* head pinned to the ground. Providentially, despite the great strain brought to bear upon it by the powerful snake's efforts, the tough iron head and shaft held firm, though bent and dragged inward to the hole at a serious arch.

It was rather a nasty fix to be in, within a foot of that deadly venomous serpent's fangs, and nothing but a slight piece of wood and iron to restrain it from taking our lives. I held on to the *assegai* shaft with all my might, but dared not rise to my feet again, for fear of being knocked away from it by the fierce sweeps of the monster's tail; so there, within a foot of those fire-gleaming eyes—awful in their deadly, hateful, and vividly magnetic glare—with its hot and sickly breath panting into my face, I had to lay. Roger could not get near enough to place the muzzle of his pistol close to the *marmbar's* body, and so have an effective shot, and as the position I was in could not last long, I called to him to place his revolver at half-cock, and throw it to me, releasing the *assegai* with one hand, which I held up to catch it. I caught the pistol successfully, and then, placing its muzzle within an inch or two of those baneful, sparkling eyes, pulled the trigger.

There was one violent and convulsive throe; the heavy folds dashed over



THE DEATH OF "LOUP."

me in a last dying sweep, then slowly relaxed, and the terrible *marmbar*—its head shattered to pieces by the revolver shot—was lying dead and harmless, though still quivering, a length of sixteen feet and a half, before us, where we had dragged it forth from its lair.

Trailing our prize along in triumph, we reached the waggons with it, and made the fair Carlotta turn deadly pale—though she was not one of the fainting sort—at hearing of her lover's late imminent danger. The skin we afterwards sold to a Kaffir doctor—to be used as *mooti* (medicine) I suppose—for as much maize as lasted our horses nearly a week.

Only a few days after this our friend, the "long Yankee," lost his old and tried companion, the faithful "Loup," at the Usuto River.

He was out after wild fowl, and had brought down a duck, which fell into the river. The noble "Loup," as usual, had plunged in after it, and had almost returned with it to the bank, when, alas! there was a sudden fierce rush through the water behind him; the poor animal beat the surface of the river into foam in his last agony, uttered a truly heartrending howl of anguish, and our friend caught the last pitiful expression of its faithful and sagacious eyes, as the jaws of a huge alligator closed upon it and dragged it out of his sight for ever, down to the dark recesses of the muddy, blood-stained river.

Our comrade felt the loss of his affectionate canine friend very keenly, far more so than one would have imagined from his Yankee, go-ahead, awfully practical nature, and narrated to us his loss with tears of grief and rage in his eyes.

Aptly did he revenge the death of "Loup" upon all such horny monsters of its destroyer's species as ever after came across his path. Hours has he waited, watching by day and by night, "to drill an alligator," as he forcibly expressed it. He was an expert marksman, and seldom missed either the eye or the tender spot behind the shoulder of his prey. So bitter, ceaseless, and constant a war did he wage against the unhappy saurians that we at length began to fear he would expend all our ammunition in that way, although we had five or six thousand empty cartridge cases to fill when those loaded were exhausted.

CHAPTER XI.

Difficulty of Waggon Travelling—Scenery on the Usuto River—Strange Fish—A Thief, and his Clever Detection by a "Medicine Man," or Native Doctor—Impediments to Travelling—The Bush in Amaswarzi Land—Our Black Cook gets Seized by a Huge Boa Constrictor—The Shlomoshlomo Mountains Bar the Way—A Nocturnal Hunt for Wild Boars—Our Return to Camp through the Jungle.

After crossing the Usuto River we were obliged to make a considerable *détour* to the north-west, inland, along its banks, in order to avoid a tract of country that laid before us in a northern direction, between the Makonshwa and Bomba mountain ranges, and which was known to be pretty thickly infested with that deadly scourge to horse and oxen, the tsetse-fly.

We were now in about the latitude of Delagoa Bay, some 200 miles distant from our starting-point on the Natal frontier, and were seventeen days out, including the stoppage at Ketchwayo's. So far, we had found but slight difficulty in travelling with our waggons, but now, after turning to the north-west, it was with considerable trouble that we found anything like a road at all. We took it by turns to ride ahead and pick out the way, but even then it laid through such thick long grass and brambles, in the openings and windings between dense and almost impenetrable jungle, that the waggons often came to a standstill, and could not get along at the rate of more than ten or twelve miles a day.

Some of the scenery along the course of the Usuto was very pleasing and picturesque, the bush being generally of a more lofty description than most of that through which we had previously passed. At one part, in particular, we came upon a spot that almost sent Louis into ecstasies, and made him at once produce his sketch-book to preserve the scene. Large trees grew thickly down to the very edge of the water, which they shaded with their dense mass of lofty, spreading, and luxuriant foliage. The view was more like some secluded little nook upon the wooded part of a stream in an English park than anything else. Birds sang in countless number from the branches; the dark



VIEW ON THE USUTO RIVER.

green leaves, so pleasing and soothing to the eye, rustled softly in the light breeze, whilst the shining silvery stream, played upon with ever-varying effect by the darkening shadows, went gently gliding and murmuring away below.

At dinner that day, whilst our young Teuton—his yellow hair all dishevelled and wild—went into strange rhapsodies of confused language over Nature's beauties so lavishly bestowed upon the spot he sketched, the

"long Yankee" brutally kept us to the sublunary, by gruffly interrupting him with, "'Say, Dutchy, never mind the leaves and trees, and shady groves, and rustling murmurs, and all that sort of thing, but just try the leg of one of these ducks I knocked over there. That's the thing to praise it for, if you like."

The "long Yankee" was surly this day, not having, as yet, had a shot at an alligator.

Besides meeting with plenty of wild ducks, we had also fish at table as long as we kept near the Usuto. There was the ordinary "scale-fish" of Natal, though here much larger, being nearly a foot long, besides immense eels, and a long, thin, delicious-tasting, and solid white-fleshed finny curiosity, about a foot and a half long, very thin and narrow, and not unlike an elongated pike or a gigantic sand-eel. We had only to throw our baited hooks into the water, and then pull them up with fish on.

Although we were now travelling through country which, on the map, appears as part of the Transvaal Republic, I venture to say it was perfectly innocent of any such thing as a Dutch or Boer settler east of the Drakensberg, if, indeed, any such a visitor had ever seen it, which I am inclined to doubt. At all events, were the Transvaal Boers ever to try and take possession of what they have so readily mapped out, they would meet with a pretty rough reception from the numerous warriors of the powerful Amaswarzi tribe, by which it is thickly populated. We found their *kraals* established at every piece of clear and open rising ground.

At a native village on a bend of the river, near the southern termination of the Makondshwa range of hills, we experienced a forcible illustration of the shrewdness and superior intelligence with which the Kaffir doctors or "medicine men" manage to maintain their position.

We had outspanned near to this kraal for the night, just at dusk, and had been surrounded by all its wondering inhabitants, who had never seen such an expedition as ours before, and were devoured with curiosity as to everything they saw, as well as with regard to our object and intentions. Having satisfied them that these were peaceable and friendly, they expressed a strong desire to trade with us, and barter hides, ivory, feathers, horns, and

various other articles for beads, bangles, and blankets—evidently taking us for traders. But as we were not prepared for this, and reserved what we had of such as things as they craved for to barter in exchange for maize and other necessaries that we might require during our long and serious journey, we were unable to accede to their proposals.

It was about eight o'clock at night when the last of our sable visitors left us and retired to the *kraal*, and, very shortly afterwards, the "long Yankee" discovered that his belt, with a formidable Arkansas "toothpick"—Anglicè, bowie-knife—and its sheath, had disappeared from where he had hung them up on a nail at the front of our waggon.

There was but little doubt that the articles had been stolen, so I and our Ganymede Thomas, accompanied him up the hill, and went to lodge a complaint with the head man of the *kraal*. This worthy proved to be a venerable old fellow, with snowy wool and beard, and who professed great indignation at hearing of our loss. He caused all the inhabitants of the *kraal*, men, women, and children, about seventy or eighty in number, to be assembled on the large open space between his own hut and the circular fence or enclosure within which the cattle were impounded.

He made a speech, telling them how iniquitous it was to steal things from the *umlungos*, and I really think that the old fellow meant it, his manner and appearance seemed so very earnest. Then he called upon the offender to come forth, and surrender the booty. Three times he made proclamation of the crime, and shouted for the thief to appear.

"The white man has been robbed, oh, my children! Puma umpangi!" (stand forth the robber).

As we expected, this invocation failed signally. The thief did not appear.

My comrade then began to express his indignation pretty freely, when the old chief interrupted him with—

"Peace, white man! I will give you a young calf to enama" (content or satisfy) "for your loss."

And I believe that this recompense was really intended, for the chief was giving instructions to bring the animal from the *kraal*, when I stopped him,

and, holding up two large blue beads—much valued by the Kaffirs of these parts—publicly offered them to any one who would restore the belt and knife.

Then the doctor or medicine man stepped up to me, his blanket wrapped closely around him, examined the beads, and offered to discover the thief, and restore the stolen articles.

His plan was most ingenious. There were fifteen men in the *kraal*, to each of whom he gave a stick cut from the brushwood near at hand. Then he told them each to hide his stick beneath his blanket, and sleep with it there, declaring that, in the morning, the stick held by the thief would have grown three fingers (breadth) longer than any of the others.

This was all he did, then stalked off mysteriously to his hut and a huge giantess of a wife standing by its entrance—the lady stood at least five feet ten or eleven inches high, and was of an exuberantly-developed figure besides—after telling us that we should have the knife early in the morning.

The fifteen *braves* one and all retired in an awe-stricken manner to their respective firesides, and with a departing "harmbar garshle" (depart in peace) from the honest old head man of the *kraal*, we returned to the waggons.

"Smart fellah that old boy," said the "long Yankee," as we descended the hill. "Can you guess the little dodge that he depends upon to find out the confounded kleptomaniac who travelled off my bowie?"

It was the very subject on which I was just cogitating, but, as I could not exactly penetrate the "medicine man's" design, replied in the negative.

"Ha, ha," chuckled my lengthy comrade; "thought not. Your old burst-up country's intellectual powers are going fast, like a cart-wheel down a greasy hill, following up the decay of her national prestige and importance. Yes, there's no kind of mistake about it. You're nowhere by the side of our go-ahead, enlightened citizens. Result of your 'bloated aristocracy,' and incubus, body-enthralling, mind-crippling old monarchy! Join us, old boy; join us" (and he became quite pathetic). "Join us, before it is too late; become a free and enlightened citizen of our glorious and never-to-be-rivalled Republic; a liberated and emancipated man; a free, happy, and renovated 'human,' living, instead of merely existing, and breathing the invigorating

air of freedom beneath the all-protecting ægis of our soaring eagle and the world-revered banner of the stars and stripes."

Fortunately, at this point of his adjuration we arrived at the waggons, and I merely replied, referring to his favourite bird, much after the style of Artemus Ward to the Southern fire-eater, that she could soar away if she wished to.

Upon asking for his opinion as to the Kaffir doctor's scheme, he replied—

"Wait a bit; let us see if 'Rule Britannia' can find it out."

"Rule Britannia," like the rest of our party, after hearing the story, pleaded his inability to penetrate the ruse, and declared his conviction that the doctor's promise would be broken.

"Wal," said our Yankee friend, after considerable introductory "bunkum," "this is how the 'medicine man' intends to find out the thief. He gave them all sticks of exactly the same length; he depends upon his influence over their minds to make the thief credit his statement and power; and so expects that the benighted nigger, believing his stick will grow the three fingers' breadth in the night, will cut it that much shorter."

Great credit did the "long Yankee" take unto himself for his penetration, much to the disgust of Roger. He was not of a very bashful or diffident disposition, as some of my readers may have perceived by this time. Like the story of Columbus and the standing of the egg on end, the thing seemed easy and simple enough now that we had been shown. No one could suggest a better or more feasible explanation, so we waited until the morning to prove it.

Directly it was daylight we ascended the hill, one and all, but found that our curiosity was greater than the anxiety of the Kaffirs, for not one of them had yet released himself from the influence of Morpheus. Soon, however, the stentorian echoes of our Anglo-Saxon voices, accompanied by the tremendous barking and baying of all the gaunt, lean, hungry-looking, and particularly ill-favoured village curs, aroused the natives from their heavy slumbers, and the head man sent for the doctor, who summoned the young men to produce their sticks. One by one the little twigs were solemnly gathered in by the fetish-man, who—with his long wool straightened, oiled, and hanging about

his neck; with the skins of birds, beasts, and fishes, with many other singular and unknown things strung about his body—presented a weird, fantastic, and barbarously-uncouth appearance; to which the keen, crafty, and somewhat sinister expression of his countenance generally, and his eyes in particular, did not lend any countervailing charm.

We observed that he retained all the sticks except one, which, directly he had received and examined, he handed to the chief. When all had been given in, he at once pointed out the giver of this selected test as the thief, and called upon the old head man to attest that it was just three fingers' breadth shorter than the others.

The theory of our perspicuous American cousin had proved correct; the defaulter, expecting his stick would grow the stated increase, had carefully cut so much off it. The doctor had, it seemed, previously unfolded his design to the chief, who now at once ordered the purloining rascal—a stupid-looking, shambling young hobbledehoy of a youth—to produce the belt and knife. This he proceeded to do in a very unconcerned manner, heedless of the opprobrious epithets addressed to him by his superior. When I gave the "medicine man" the beads which he had so ingeniously earned, we walked down the other side of the hill, and joined our waggons, which were already on the *trek*.

The Drakensberg Mountains were now plainly in sight, as a long blue line against the sky, some fifty miles ahead. Having now turned the southern termination of the Makondshwa range, we once more bore away due north, on a higher plateau, through very rugged and broken ground, and dense thickets that became almost impassable at times. During several days our progress cannot have been greater than twenty-five miles, and we saw, not far before us, another lofty range of mountains, apparently—as far as we could see for the ceaseless jungle—stretching from the Drakensberg at right angles across our path.

Sometimes we were literally obliged to cut our way through the bush, in order to reach the more open glades and untimbered spaces where the waggons could travel. Large trees, banyans, a small species of baobab—often three or four feet in diameter, though seldom thirty feet high to its topmost twigs—with "yellow wood," red and white "milk wood," "stink



BUSH SCENERY IN AMASWARZI LAND.

wood," lignum vitæ, and other hard woods, constituted the principal trees of the forest ; whilst a dense and prodigious undergrowth clung and twined around the trunks, stretched laterally from stem to stem, and crept in countless profusion, with ever-varying form, but one persistent nature, to fasten on to the overhanging branches, as though to drag the tall trees earthward. In fact, these innumerable parasites no doubt prevented their more stately supports from attaining the full altitude to which they were destined by Nature. One of our deadliest bush enemies was that horrid, hanging, stretching, and prolific creeper, known so appositely as the "wait-a-bit." This wretched member of the vegetable world grows through a jungle just like ropes, twisted, twined, and spread in every direction. It is tough and strong as wire, about two inches thick, very hard on the outside, and is thickly studded with huge thorns, nearly three inches long, with their sharp terminations diabolically bent back, so as to form a regular hook. Besides this, we found a promising congener to

the "wait-a-bit;" a creeping, crawling parasite of a very similar form and appearance; the principal divergence being the fact that its thorns were straight instead of curved, standing out in formidable and prickly array, like so many miniature imitations of the *chevaux-de-frise*, a length of from two to four inches. This was a nice sort of thing to make one's way through! But we had to do so whenever we went out hunting, as it was necessary to penetrate the bush in order to get at the wild animals. I noticed everywhere about, in endless profusion and abundance, the yellow laburnum, the prickly aloe, many strange and beautiful flowers, flowering creepers covering many of the trees with gorgeous blossoms, and convolvuli of great size and variously-tinted beauty. I often wished that botany had been one of my attainments, for I am quite sure that we trampled over many an unknown plant and flower during our travels.

This part of the country was infested with pythons or boa-constrictors, and we found it necessary to exercise great caution in moving through the bush. We killed no less than five in two days, four of them having been found lying gorged right in our path. One was about seven feet in length, another nine, and two were a little over twelve. The fifth, and largest, a brute measuring nearly nineteen feet in length, and three in girth, was almost making a meal of our unhappy Thomas.

We had outspanned for dinner in a little glade between the bush, and close to where, between the trees, glimpses could be caught of a tiny watercourse. Thither, after lighting a fire, proceeded our sable cook to fill the camp-kettle. He had not twenty yards to go, and had just about reached the little brook, when, good Heavens! what a fearful and appalling yell burst from him, a cry expressive of such agonising terror, and which broke upon our startled sense of hearing with such sudden and awful abruptness, that every one of us sprang up to his feet, as though an arrow had been driven into him. Seizing our guns, we rushed to the spot, Carlotta and all, excepting only the "long Yankee," who remained behind. Almost, however, at the very moment when we were horrified to see the unfortunate Thomas struggling in the coils of the huge python, we heard the loud crack of our comrade's rifle, the snake fell in a writhing, hideous confusion from the branch to which it had been hanging

by the upper part of its body, and our wretched servitor crawled forth, perfectly blue and livid, and only to faint dead away directly he had got clear of the loathsome folds. The keen-eyed Yankee, having seen the critical scene, and having detected the head of the boa, had sent a rifle-bullet crashing through its head. How the extraordinary position in which we saw them had been accomplished we could not imagine, nor could Tom tell us when he recovered—all that he knew being the fact that he felt himself suddenly knocked down and then enveloped in the folds of the huge python—but the hateful monster was hanging with its neck twisted around a branch, whilst our cook hung suspended in the air with a complete round-turn of its body encircling him. Whether it was that this position did not enable the snake to exercise its immense crushing and constricting power, or whether our friend's splendid shot was fired ere it had time to try, I cannot tell, but certain it is that our servant escaped with no greater injury than the terrible fright, and a few slight bruises.

What with this uncomfortable adventure, and the reminiscence of the electric fish, the not at any time courageous Thomas seemed to live in momentary dread of his life; and existence, under these circumstances, must have been a perfect torment to him. It was some few hours ere the poor fellow regained sufficient strength and consciousness to become coherent, and then the first thing he did was to come to me—whom he always consulted when in trouble, because he had first entered our service as my attendant, and, perhaps, because he preferred my treatment to that of the others—and cry—

"Oh, massa! Mi don't want hamba" (go) "dis way furder. Tanda hamba buza kia ga mina" (I want to go back to my house).

"No, no, Tom; that won't do. You have had a month's pay in advance; you've agreed to serve us for the period of our journey, and you cannot leave now," I replied. "Besides, how are you going back alone through all this bush, past all those snakes, alligators, hippopotami, skellem fish, and other bad things, eh?"

"Oh, oh! Wow, wow! massa. Miningi skellem, inyoka" (snakes), "oder tings! By-em-by some-ting come ketch me, scoff me up—nebber see my wife, my ingane" (children), "nebber no more times. Whoo-oo-oo, what I do?"

At last I managed to convince him that he was far safer by remaining under our protection than he would be in returning alone to Natal. Ever afterwards, however, he seemed to look upon every bush as containing some dangerous and deadly thing; and nothing could induce him to move a dozen yards away from the waggons, unless protected by the immediate presence of some one or more of our party.

Upon arriving at the foot of the hilly range referred to as stretching from the Drakensberg across our path due north, we found it impossible to meet with any pass, opening, or unwooded part by which we could surmount them with our waggons; the consequence being that we were obliged to turn off and travel to the eastward, along their base, in a direct line for the Makondshwa Hills, rising above the forest land at a distance of some forty miles.

The mountains that barred our way were called Shlomoshlomo by the Amaswarzies we spoke to, and were covered with the most densely-matted bush that we had yet come to. The natives also told us that the "kulu ingulubi," or wild boar, abounded in the fastnesses of this range, which terminated, they further informed us, some distance from the other.

Visions of wild boar and roast pork, recollections of white-fleshed, tender, and delicious peccary, haunted us that day; and so, at night, knowing that that was the only time at which we would have a chance of falling in with the "kulu ingulubis," as they always remained in their lairs (mostly inaccessible to man) during the day, but came down to the plains and water at night.

The waggons were outspanned at six o'clock that evening, rather earlier than usual, so that we could have our dinner, and then pick out suitable spots in the bush for an ambuscade against the pigs before it became quite dark.

Louis, Roger, and Tom Ashwell remained to take care of the waggons, the remaining four of us divided into two parties; I and Mr. van Meyer Wilhelm and the "long Yankee."

We agreed to penetrate the dense jungle clothing the foot of the hills, advance about half a mile into it, and then take up our respective positions on either side of a *nullah*, or water-course, descending to the level ground.

By the time that I and my companion had about attained the distance arranged, it was perfectly dark, the night was very cloudy, and we could not

see half a dozen yards through the thick and matted bush. Then we moved off at right angles to our previous advance, so as to strike the water-course and take up our station. On reaching this we picked out a convenient tree, with thick, low, and overhanging boughs, between the forks of which we comfortably installed ourselves, lighting our pipes, and making ourselves as jolly as possible under the circumstances.

It so happened that we were located immediately over a "run" leading from the opposite bank to the water, but for a long time nothing on four feet approached, and the only sound that broke the deep silence of the night was the hum, chirp, and croak, of innumerable busy insects and hoarse voiced frogs. About nine o'clock, however, several animals came down to drink, one after the other, and amongst them we recognised the first *gnu* we had yet seen, as well as several hyenas. Suddenly, these first arrivals dashed off in dire haste and alarm, and a large leopard took their place. Both the *gnu* and its feline successor strongly tried our patience, and we were nearly having a shot at them, though we knew that this would spoil our chance of wild pig. After this, for a long time nothing could be heard but the noise of the insects, the wild, mournful, and penetrating cry of the night hawk, and the occasional soughing of the breeze amongst the trees. Several hours passed away, and we were just thinking of returning home, when the loud report of the rifles of the other party rang echoing with prolonged reverberations from some distance down the gully. We were instantly on the alert, and in a few moments heard the crashing of twigs, the rolling of stones, and the noise made by several heavy animals in full flight towards us.

"Pick out the first one," I whispered to my comrade.

At the same instant several large black things appeared beneath us, we fired together, and the leading beast rolled over in his tracks; the rest, with formidable grunts, dashing away up the almost dry watercourse. So we knew that our patience had been rewarded; that it was a wild boar we had knocked over. Besides my rifle, I carried a fowling-piece loaded with ball. Descending with this, whilst my companion re-loaded his heavy *roer*, I advanced to the prostrate beast; finding, however, that it was stone dead, was a good-sized wild boar, and had received one of our shots through its head.



THE RETURN FROM OUR NOCTURNAL HUNT.

Then we cut a pole, slung the monster, and, carrying it between us, turned homeward, and shouted to our other friends that we had bagged the game. Soon, however, we became aware that it was impossible either to find our way or carry the burden—at least three hundred-weight—in the dark, as every now and then, catching our feet in some of the tough creepers, down we would go, pig and all, in not the most agreeable manner ; so we cut some

wood for torches, struck a light, and trudged away more comfortably through the dark jungle. But it was terribly hard work, and we went puffing and panting along, perspiring profusely, and having to halt every now and then for a rest. It was a wild, fantastic scene, as we travelled back to the waggons that night; the fitful gleam of our torches casting a lurid glare upon the sombre overhanging woods, a red illumination upon ourselves and bristly burden, and making the deep black shadows darker and more sinister than before.

CHAPTER XII.

We meet Makushlar, Chief Paramount of the Amaswarzis—He Behaves Rudely to Carlotta, and gets Kicked—The Amaswarzis Threaten us and Declare War—Our Defensive Measures—A Desperate Night Attack on our Position; its Repulse—Our First Giraffe—Receive an Embassy from Makushlar, who makes a tempting Offer of Marriage and of Regal Partnership—A New Style of Scenery—Geological Formation—Our First Glimpse of Lions.

By this time the courtship of my old friend Roger had arrived at a successful and happy period. His proposal for the beautiful Carlotta's hand had been readily accepted by her father, and it was definitely arranged that the marriage should take place so soon as we once more reached civilised regions upon our return from the Tatin; unless, indeed, we found that the auriferous prospect held out sufficient temptation for a lengthened sojourn in those parts, in which case it was agreed by those most interested that advantage should be taken of the nearest missionary station.

The marked admiration with which, wherever we passed, the Kaffirs regarded his mistress, was a ceaseless source of no little trouble and vexation to my chum. These plain-speaking natives were by no means elegant in their expressions, nor over modest in their allusions; and our temper was often put to a severe trial by the blunt, pointed, and not too delicate way in which, without meaning any insult or offence, they praised the charms of our fair companion.

Only a few days after our nocturnal wild boar hunt, and shortly before we passed out of the Amaswarzi country, we got into a serious row through this cause.

After flanking the Shlomoshlomo range, and starting forward again due north, upon comparatively level ground, parallel to the Makondshwa Hills, at a distance of about ten miles, we came to the large *kraal* of Makushlar, chief paramount of the Amaswarzi tribe, upon the banks of the Limansi River.

Crossing this stream, about a hundred yards wide, but very shallow—at the ford only four feet deep—we proceeded to outspan upon the grassy plains to the west of the hilly ground on which the *kraal* was built.

Messengers came to us from the chief, demanding to know our business. Warned by former experience that it was not advisable to announce ourselves as travellers or explorers, and being unable to declare that we were traders (which is the best passport), as we should have been brought to confusion by having an insufficiency of goods to trade with, we stated that our party formed a hunting expedition, bound for the country north of the Limpopo.

The messengers departed, but in a short time returned, to announce the coming of their chief. This worthy, with a large following of warriors and councillors, soon arrived in person. Our tent was pitched, and we received him and several of his head men to an audience within it, keeping the rabble outside, where they squatted down upon the ground very contentedly, though gabbling very vociferously together, and eyeing ourselves and belongings with considerable curiosity.

The royal Makushlar had but small regal qualities beyond the name, and his personal appearance was particularly unfavourable. Without exception, he was the ugliest, most villanous-looking Kaffir we ever saw. He was "cro'-jack eyed," that is to say, squinted outwards. He had a low, retreating forehead, with very little wool upon the summit of his cranium, on "the place where the wool ought to grow." His complexion was much darker than that usual amongst the Kaffirs, and told pretty plainly of a later negro mixture. His jaws were heavy and protruding, with blubber lips, a huge mouth, and the dirtiest, most irregular teeth—jagged yellow fangs—that I ever saw upon a native. Besides this, a huge scar, dividing his flat though large nose, and crossing both cheeks diagonally, added not a little to his natural ugliness.

No sooner had this unfavourable specimen of the "noble savage" entered our tent, and taken up his seat upon a tiger-skin spread upon the ground for him by one of his companions, than he fixed his gaze upon Miss van Meyer. At first he did nothing but speak in monosyllables and exclamations, leaving all the *indarbar*, or conference, to his *umlomobotu*. He seemed dazed or smitten with the charms of the *umlungukazi* (white woman); the first, beyond doubt, he had ever seen. By degrees, however, his confidence returned, and he began addressing the young lady in a way that soon brought the blushes to her cheeks, and made Roger get uncomfortably-looking red

and angry in the face. We did all that was possible to divert his attention, and induce him to attend to the business on which he came, but without avail. Accustomed all his life to the uncontrolled exercise of his own will and power, nothing could divert him from the rude contemplation of our fair companion, and the coarse expression of the strong impression she had made upon his savage mind. It became evident that there would soon be a row. Our revolvers very seldom left our belts, and our rifles were in the tent, so we were quite prepared for an emergency.

Not satisfied with gloating upon her charms, and expressing his coarse, sensual, and indelicate admiration, the chief at last got up and went to handle her. The brute, I dare say, knew no better, and was not so much to blame for only acting in the way of his people, any of whom would have considered it a high honour to have their daughters squeezed, stroked, and patted by the royal savage. But we could not stand it. The crisis had arrived. Almost at the same moment, and just as his dirty paw touched her dress, Roger and Wilhelm sprang upon him—the former lifting his right fist, with the sudden impulse of knocking him down—and bundled him out of the tent.

Instantly from the mob outside there arose a terrible yell, when they saw the unceremonious treatment to which their potent lord and master had been subjected.

"Lwr! Lwr!" (fight! fight!) they cried ferociously, whirling their *knobkerries* and brandishing their *assegais;* but although many of the warriors continued to shout and to threaten us, whilst others gathered in a noisy group around their chief, they did not seem very anxious for the fray, and no *assegais* were thrown.

But then, seven well-armed white men, drawn up in an extended line, with rifle ready in hand, whilst spare guns and ammunition were being carried to us by our native servants, were rather dangerous to attack.

Makushlar quickly went off to his *kraal*, followed by all his people, and we at once proceeded to collect our oxen, and inspan for a *trek* from the now dangerous locality.

Very fortunately for us the country hereabouts was far more open than that through which we had so lately passed, or the Kaffirs would have been

able to waylay and attack us in the bush, their favourite and formidable style of warfare. But the thickets were now only dotted here and there in clumps, and we were mostly able to keep beyond *assegai* range of them.

What we dreaded more than all was that the Amaswarzis might follow us, and try to capture our oxen when out grazing, which would place us at their mercy; and the chief, when departing, had stayed a moment to menace us, and cry—

"Gi vuma bularlar wena! Gi vuma na umlungukazi masinya!" (I'll kill you! And I'll have the white woman soon!)

This was not a very pleasant prospect, and we knew that the Zulu tribes were reputed, and not without reason, to be brave and warlike.

That *trek* was the most forced and rapid we had yet made, and our poor oxen suffered accordingly. And although we were anxious not to knock them up, yet it was imperative to get as far away from Makushlar's *kraal* as we possibly could ere night set in.

Our drivers yelled and "yak-yaked," until they became hoarse, and the ceaseless whirling and cracking of their long whips kept both teams at a run nearly all the afternoon.

Shortly before passing out of the forest land, we witnessed a terrible encounter between a huge boa constrictor and a young leopard. Attracted by the loud hissing of the snake, and the muffled, strangled, agonised roaring of its antagonist, we ran in the direction of the noise, and saw the former coiled tight around the neck and body of the leopard, its tail having a firm grip of a bough overhead. The unfortunate feline brute was held in such a way as to be quite helpless, and was being fast strangled, its eyes starting furious and hideous from its head, its great red tongue swollen and extended whilst vainly gasping for breath, as the frightful boa crushed and squeezed away with its huge, powerful folds, springing its arched neck and head backwards and forwards in fury, its long, thin, forked tongue darting in and out, and its horrible, wondrously coruscant little eyes, flashing with a fierce and baneful aspect, bright as electric sparks. We killed both monsters, but went on our way at once, as we had no time to waste in taking their skins. The



LEOPARD ATTACKED BY A PYTHON.

boa was over twenty-seven feet in length and four and a half in circumference at the thickest part.

Towards evening we began to enter a more rocky, barren, and unwooded country, and looked about us for a good position upon which to camp for the night, as it would have been impossible to travel over such broken ground in the dark, even had the cattle been able to go on without a rest and feed.

By good luck we came upon a rocky ridge rising up from the plain, about thirty yards long by twenty broad. On one side it was steep and inaccessible, and rose about fifteen feet in a solid granite cliff; upon the other it sloped gently down to the plain. We drew our waggons up lengthways at the highest part of the ridge, parallel to it, and a few yards from the precipitous side, then turned the oxen out to feed and water near at hand.

We next divided ourselves into two watches, which, for fun, we called the "starboard" and "port." Carlotta insisted upon joining one of these, and taking her share of duty and danger with us; and, indeed, she was not a helpless addition to our force, either, for she could handle her own beautiful little double-barrel, and was as good a marksman as the best of us. In answer to our remonstrances, both her brother and father laughed, and the latter said—

"Ha, ha! mein friends, do you tink der fraulein of der Boer fears der Kaffirs—fears der smell of gunpowder? No, no, mein boys. Dey have seen too much of bush-fighting mit der 'black ivory.' It will not be der first time dat Carlotta has seen a little *roer*-firing and *assegai*-throwing, I can tell you."

And so the matter ended, Carlotta being appointed to the starboard watch, which also contained her father and brother, and, of course, the devoted Roger, as well as the Van Meyers' two Kaffir servants; the rest of us formed the port watch.

Until about eight o'clock we took it by turns, two and two, to go out on scouting duty, so as to obtain timely evidence of any hostile movement, in order to save our grazing cattle. Up to that hour, however, nothing transpired to alarm us, and then we gathered in the horses and oxen, tethering them together securely behind the waggons.

Contrary to the nautical custom, our port watch was the first to go on

duty, but this was in order to give our fair comrade as little fatigue as possible, her party being appointed to relieve us at midnight, after which they were to call us for a second turn at four in the morning

Rifle in hand, revolver and sword-bayonet in belt, we kept a keen look-out during our term of duty, our driver and forelouper, both determined fellows, being armed with fowling-pieces, in addition to their *assegais*. As for Thomas, all we could do with him was to make him keep the coffee-pot going, whilst we further comforted ourselves with pipe or cheroot and occasional applications to a substantial-looking, black, and square-faced bottle.

At midnight we were relieved, and retired to rest, "all standing"—boots, rifles, pistols, and all. At four o'clock we were called, and went on watch again. Up to this time the night had passed over without the slightest cause for alarm, but scarcely had we turned out and relieved our friends, lighted up our pipes, and tossed off a steaming hot cup of coffee, with just a *petit verre* of cognac in it to warm us against the early morning dew, when the four native dogs that we had lately picked up became very restless, and set up a furious barking in the direction of the sloping ascent to our position.

This was a sure sign that something approached, either man or beast, so we were at once keenly on the alert. The other watch, also, instead of turning in, rejoined us, Mynheer saying—

"We skal not go to sleep, mein boys. Dese Kaffir dogs are goot for watch; dey smell sometings coming; and dis is shoost der time der natives like to make an attack—in der grey of morning."

"Right you are, Mynheer," said the "long Yankee." "I reckon the nigger is the same throughout creation. Injun out my way prefers the same time to make a tomahawk rush. I remember once, out on the great western prairie——"

"Sch-sh!" he suddenly interrupted himself with, whilst the dogs opened again an angry bay in chorus.

"Stand by, boys!" There's something—and a pretty considerable something, too, or call this child a mole—moving towards us under cover of the bush right in front there."

Even as he spoke we all gazed earnestly in the indicated direction, and

plainly saw a large and wide-spread dark mass coming towards us straight from a small thicket about a quarter of a mile distant.

Our arrangements were speedily made. Behind Van Meyer's waggon we placed its owner, Roger, Carlotta, the "long Yankee," and its driver and fore-louper, so as to divide our Sniders as equally as possible. Wilhelm, Louis, Tom Ashwell, and myself, with our two natives, crouched down behind our own vehicle; Thomas being left to do as he pleased, for he was quite useless as a fighting man.

Scarcely were our dispositions completed when we heard the trampling of many feet, and saw a large body of men rushing up the slope upon us at full speed. They hoped, no doubt, either to surprise us in our sleep, or overpower us before able to resist, by the rapidity of their attack.

"Let us fire by turns, one party after the other, and we will commence," I cried to my comrades; and then, as the advancing Kaffirs were within a couple of hundred yards, challenged them with—

"Ma, ma-lo! Uma car-bo, tina dubula!" (Halt, halt! Or we fire!)

No reply was given; but we heard a voice, that of Makushlar himself, cry to his men—

"Hambisa! Hambisa! Baleka hambisa!" (Forward! Forward! Run forward!)

Then on came that body of savage warriors at a run, and in the same ominous silence as before.

"Take care now, boys," cried the "long Yankee" to our party. "Don't throw away a shot. Aim low, and let rip when they're within fifty yards."

The gleam of the spears and *assegais* was now perceptible. I told each of my five companions to pick out a slightly different part of the approaching line, then, after a steady aim, gave the word to fire.

The report of our guns was followed by a few cries of agony; we saw four or five dark forms roll upon the turf; and a loud yell burst forth from the whole formidable body, which still advanced, amidst furious cries of—

"Lwr! Lwr! Bularlar umlungo!" (Fight! Fight! Kill the white men!)

But even as they yelled and came on in a wavering manner, staggered by

our first volley, the rattling discharge from our second division sent another dose of bullets crashing in amongst them, after a couple of moments' pause, to give us time to re-load ; this brought them to a standstill.

They now hurled showers of *assegais*, and the missiles came whizzing and whirling about us in every direction. Had it not been for the excellent position we had chosen our loss must have been very severe ; in fact, I believe that we would every one have been pierced with the thick and incessant shower of darts. But, crouched down behind our waggons, we were all perfectly sheltered ; and, although we had an easy task to fire underneath them down the slope, the *assegais*, launched high in air, either stuck into the waggons, the ground before them, or fell safely beyond. Besides this, our assailants had a few muskets, but, to the best of our knowledge, not a ball from them came near us ; and we afterwards found some half-dozen arrows sticking into the sides and tents of our waggons, but the bow, fortunately for us, was not a Zulu weapon, being used by northern tribes.

We kept up a terrible fire upon the mass of yelling and leaping forms before us, at a distance of less than forty yards. The fire from our five Sniders was steady and incessant, without a moment's intermission; whilst the louder report of fowling-pieces, and the still heavier roar of the Van Meyers' heavy *roers*, mingled at slower intervals with the ceaseless cracking of the rifles.

The fierce Kaffirs, though they must have been electrified and astounded by this terrible and sustained fire from so small a party as ours, nevertheless stood their ground manfully for a few moments, and made two desperate attempts to advance and get to close quarters with us; in which case, from their overwhelming numbers—two hundred at least—our fate would have been certain. The chief himself was evidently no coward, for we could see him, despite the darkness, rush in front of his warriors with several of his head men, and gallantly lead them on in their last charge.

On came those fierce and dusky warriors, leaping and springing into the air with extraordinary bounds, to dodge our aim, more like fiends in torment than men in battle, and vainly striving to shelter themselves from our bullets with their bull-hide shields.

It was a critical moment, for, despite the close and terrible volley which we now poured in altogether, still on they came, though the energy of the assault was broken.

Makushlar had gone down, with several others, beneath that deadly discharge, and we hoped that he was disposed of, but the next moment he appeared again, one arm hanging by his side, and shouting—

"Lwa-la, lwa-la, yamabutu ga mina!" (Charge, charge, my warriors!)

This was the crisis of the desperate conflict; they would be upon us before we could re-load all our guns.

At the same instant, Roger, the "long Yankee," and myself, shouted, "Out revolvers!"

Scarcely twenty yards off the dense array of savage Zulus were bounding forward, when the ceaseless and rapid detonation of our deadly revolvers drowned their war-cries, sent an irresistible shower of lead tearing amongst their naked bodies, and effectually put them to flight.

But even in this emergency they managed to carry off their dead and wounded, not a man of whom was left behind, although at least thirty or forty altogether must have been placed *hors de combat.*

Not one of our party had received a scratch, thanks to the effectual shelter of our impromptu fortress, though three of our oxen were killed, and several others, as well as Wilhelm's horse, were wounded by *assegais* that had passed over the waggons. We had eight extra oxen, so, fortunately, the loss of three did not affect our travelling, and we at once proceeded to cut up and salt down the dead animals for food; leaving two of the party on the look-out, though but little danger of a fresh attack existed—our assailants had met with too warm a reception.

Soon after daylight we inspanned, and *treked* away from the battle-ground; four of us having first been out to scout, and having met with sufficient indications to show that our late antagonists had gone straight off to their *kraal.*

Again we travelled forward with the utmost speed at which the oxen could be driven, for Makushlar seemed a determined fellow, and, so long as we remained in his territory, despite the severe repulse he had met with, we did not feel by any means secure. It was very lucky for us that the country had

now become so comparatively clear and open as to be unsuitable for bush-fighting; had it been otherwise we should surely have been waylaid at some awkward pass between dense jungle, where the Kaffirs could have assegaied us at their ease.

The day after the fight, whilst I and the "long Yankee" were out on the scout—for we still observed this precaution—we suddenly fell in with a herd of giraffes.

"Jehoshaphat!" yelled my companion, as we suddenly turned a large ribbed and plateau-formed hill, and found ourselves close upon a grazing herd of the huge, ungainly animals; "what are these?"

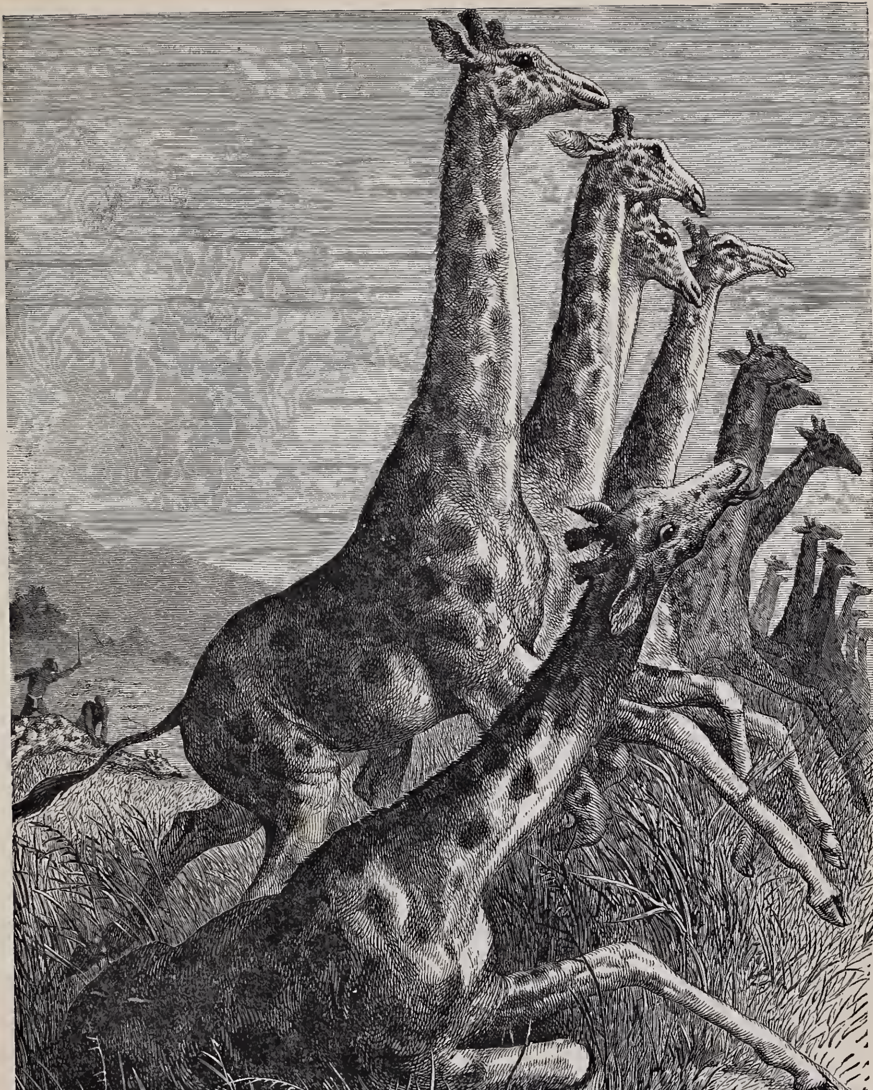
"Giraffes, by Jove!" I replied. "Let us have a shot at them!"

And forward we dashed, as the strange wild things went off at a gallop that promised soon to place them far beyond our reach; their long legs flying out to an extraordinary distance, and in a most absurd-looking manner. Unaccustomed to firing on horseback, I only wounded the animal I had selected, but my comrade, cunningly jumping to the ground, and taking a steady aim, brought down one of the largest of the herd with a bullet through its heart.

By this time two of our Kaffirs had come up, and they rushed upon the wounded but struggling giraffe. The excitement of the chase was over, and I shall not soon forget the wild, agonised, pleading sort of expression in that poor brute's large, dilated eyes, as it bent up its long neck to gaze at us in fear and pain.

"Shoot it through the head, Will. Put it out of pain," I said; but, for my part I did not feel inclined to face those big and sorrowful eyes, now fast dimming with the shadow of death. After all, it is a cruel thing, this slaughtering of God's creatures. A Nimrod's sensations cannot be all of pleasure.

My friend had no such scruples, but leisurely pulled out his revolver, and, putting the muzzle close to the prostrate animal's forehead, relieved it from further suffering; and what, but a moment before, had been scampering wild, free, and happy over the plains, was now a still and lifeless mass at our feet. It was worse than shooting Kaffirs, for they would stick you as full of assegais as a pincushion is of pins—and with but very slight compunction either—if they could.



THE LONG YANKEE'S SHOT.

However, my reveries were interrupted by Will, who said—

"Come, lend me a hand to skin this meat. It's capital eating, too, I 've heard; so we'll try a little roast giraffe to-night. Don't come across these kind of creaturs out my way."

I lent him a hand, but did not like it; but then neither did I care to expose myself to his merciless raillery, if I betrayed any qualms of conscience about the killing and cutting up of beasts of the chase.

The victims each measured about twenty feet from the point of the tail to the end of the nose, and seventeen from hoofs to horns. My friend had a heavy and a gory load with the skins, whilst I carried some huge slices from the haunch and buttocks. We found the meat very white, tender, and esculent, with a flavour a little of pork and more of something else—horsey, I should opine. But I did not greatly enjoy the strange new meal—I could not exactly forget the last glance of those dying eyes. Long before we left the spot many natives from neighbouring *kraals*, attracted, like vultures, to the feast, were squatted very happily around the carcases, lighting fires, and stuffing away as though it was the first meat they had ever eaten in their lives.

During the next day's journey, our rear-guard of Roger and Wilhelm came galloping in to say that a party of natives were coming up in pursuit.

At once we drove up to some rising ground, halted the waggons so as to form two sides of a square, and covered the other two by firmly securing the teams across them. Then we prepared our arms, and made all ready to meet another attack.

When, however, the approaching party came in sight, our fears were dispersed, for it did not number more than thirty, and seemed unarmed. Upon observing our warlike attitude and military position, the natives halted, two coming forward, one of whom bore a long pole, with a large bunch of grass or something of the sort upon the end.

"What does that mean?" I asked our sable Ganymede, who neither quaked, nor turned a sickly blue—and that was reassuring.

"He no want fight, massa. Dat mealy" (maize) "stalks on stick; mean he likee indarbar; talkee—talkee; no want more ukulwa" (war).

So it was a flag of truce; a curious one, to say the least.

We called to the ambassadors to advance, removed one team, and went to meet them, leaving our rifles behind, as they were unarmed.

Then, after a long *indarbar*, in which the fine-looking old warrior who represented Makushlar did not fail to make us understand that they only desisted from pursuing and exterminating us because all the wise men and councillors had decided, in solemn conclave, that it would be useless to fight with "targarti umlungos," who, with "targarti isibarmo" (magic guns), were able to fight and shoot as much as a whole tribe could with unbewitched means, he made a formal proposal for our fair companion's marriage to his chief!

The roars of laughter with which this was received by every one of our party, and by none more than the lady herself, greatly offended the grave old envoy's dignity. He started up from where he had been squatting in the midst of our formation, and seemed on the point of retiring in wrath and dudgeon. Then it was evident how pressing his instructions from his chief had been, for he overcame the impulse—not without considerable difficulty—and once more squatted down, waiting in a serious contemptuous manner for the termination of our boisterous and, to him, unseemly merriment. This at last ceased, and he addressed us again, more particularly Mr. van Meyer, who he had ascertained was the enchantress's father.

"How many oxen do you require?" he asked. "You have only to name the number. The great Inkosi Makushlar keeps not a close hand; his *kraals* are numerous as the hills, his cattle plentiful as the blades of grass. He has commissioned me to say that whatever number you may require for your daughter shall be given. Besides this, your waggons shall be loaded with ivory, fine *krosses*, and ostrich-feathers. The umlungu inkosikasi (white lady) shall be his head wife; she shall be great above all others. Their children shall be our rulers generation after generation, so long as the earth and the mighty Amaswarzi tribe exists. She shall have a royal hut of her own; our maidens shall be her slaves, our warriors her servants."

How long this splendid enumeration of royal dignities and favours to be conferred would have lasted is hidden by the veil of futurity, for Mynheer interrupted the orator—no doubt selected for his powers in that line—just when his eloquence was becoming most impassioned and sublime, by sternly

informing him that white men did not sell their daughters for cattle, that all their possessions could never obtain the desired end, and that the audience was at an end.

The old diplomat had yet another proposal to unfold. He actually offered us the share of government with the royal Makushlar. We should be his equals in power and rank, share everything; and he did not fail to try and tempt us with prospects of *loot*, cattle, women, and lands, which to Kaffir instincts must have seemed irresistible, by pointing out how, in alliance with the Amaswarzi *braves*, and by aid of our "targarti isibarmo," we would be able to overrun the country of the Umzeilwar, the deadly enemies on the northern frontier of his tribe, and spread our conquests far and wide.

He seemed not a little astonished when he found that all his eloquence, all his magnificent proposals, all the contemplated concessions, were in vain.

"Tom," cried the "long Yankee" to our cook, seeing that the conference had terminated, "just get that barrel of treacle out of the waggon, and bring my feather pillow with it."

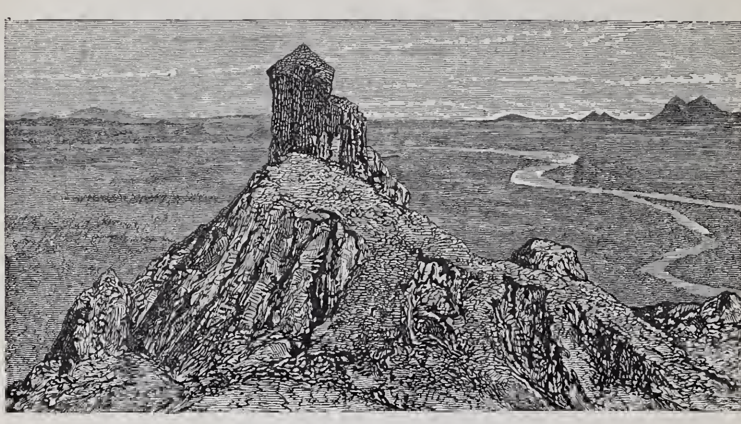
"Yes, saar," said Thomas, rushing off to obey one whom he dreaded not a little.

"You see," said Will, turning to us in explanation, "I just reckon that we're going to tar and feather the old nigger, by way of example, and to show that old savage, Makushlar, that he cannot try to Mormonise a white gal. True, we have not any tar, but molasses make a very good substitute, ef yer know how to lay 'em on, and this child has tried his hand at it before today, and don't mind busting up his best pillow, just for the principle of the thing, as they said down South, when they tied up that Union apostle of emancipation, old John Brown."

Much to his disgust, we unanimously negatived his lynching process, and dismissed the nonplussed ambassador in peace, giving him about a pound weight of salt, the most highly valued commodity in Kaffir Land. This generosity quite opened the old fellow's heart, and he informed us, almost affectionately, that *he* was for war, and that he should do all in his power to induce Makushlar to collect his forces and follow on our trail. He was

candid, at all events ; so we gave him a couple of beads as earrings for his prettiest daughter for that, and bade him adieu, then went forward on our journey. The old warrior's warlike sentiments must have failed to overcome the prejudice of his compatriots against the "targarti isibarmo," as we never either saw or heard any more of them ; and so the fair Carlotta lost the chance of becoming a Kaffir queen.

We still continued to *trek* forward as rapidly as possible, and, on the



VIEW FROM THE STRANGE ROCK.

morning of the fourth day after the fight, came to the termination of the rocky and hilly ground at a spot where, several hundred feet beneath us, stretched a low and extensive alluvial plain, over which we had no doubt that the sea had at one time flowed, unless, indeed, a lake had once existed there. The higher ground bent round in a sort of semicircle on the inland side, whilst to the east, towards the sea, the grassy plain extended far as the eye could reach. Far below, in serpentine sinuosity, like a silver thread, ran a small tributary of the Usabayo, or Sabia River, which formed the extreme northern boundary of the Amaswarzi land. The spot from which we looked down upon this plain was a rugged rocky promontory, jutting out into it, and upon the highest point of which we found a singular-shaped rock, which



OUR FIRST VIEW OF LIONS.

some of us believed to have been chiseled into that form, by hand, in some distant age.

So tempest-worn and time-decayed, however, was the peculiar rock in question, that it would have required far more experienced antiquarians and archæologists than any of us to decide whether the marks, the shape, and the irregularities of its surface were the work of Nature or of man. From this spot we were able to pick out a sloping descent, not far off, by which our waggons could reach the plain.

The country through which we had just passed was of plutonic formation, a singular quartzose granite being the prevailing rock. This was formed of large irregular pieces of quartz and felspar, of a marked reddish colour, and containing a very small proportion of talc. Altogether it was the most peculiar, rough, and coarsely formed granite that I ever saw. Occasional small reefs and veins of pure white quartz existed, but not of an auriferous nature, being too hard, pure, and seamless. Not a trace of the precious metal could we discover, although we were now fairly within the southern limits of the Monomotapa Region—marked "rich in gold" by the ancient geographers.

Upon descending to the wide alluvial flat, we followed the course of the little stream until we came to higher ground once more. Here we found an almost tropical vegetation of palms, wild banana trees, and huge aloes. The place was infested with large snakes and beasts of prey. At night, for the first time, we heard the roaring of lions, and so kept up a large camp-fire to scare them away. At sunrise in the morning we saw a couple of those monarchs of the forest, as we crossed the little stream for the last time. About half a mile higher up its channel we saw a lioness basking in the early morning sun, probably being gorged, whilst another suddenly dashed past, leaping with huge bounds after a herd of antelope, eager for her breakfast. We all mounted our horses, and rode off to have a shot at the dormant brute, but were disappointed. She did not wait for us, but ran off into some thick bush, where we could not follow; and we were too anxious to quit Amaswarzi land to remain there for a regular hunt.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Kaffir Leopard Hunt—We are Stopped by Heavy Rain: Our Proceedings during the Delay—Monsieur Louis Consults the Ninth Chapter of Genesis—An Alarm: Tom, our Black Cook, Climbing a Tree to Rob a Nest, is in great Peril by the Attack of an Immense "Umunto-umrari," or "Man-eater" Eagle—I Discover a New Kind of Tea—About the Sociality and Hospitality of the Kaffirs—No Man's Land—Quartz Formation at the Sabia River.

UPON crossing the Ukwena, the Krokodil River of the Boers, we once again entered upon a densely-wooded country. The forests, however, contained far larger trees than any we had yet seen, and the undergrowth was not so luxuriant. We were now almost out of reach of our friend, Makushlar, as his outlying *kraals* were but a few miles beyond the Ukwena. Upon passing these villages we found that the warriors were well provided with horses, probably to secure a rapid retreat to head-quarters in event of an attack by their bitter enemies, the Umzeilas. A large party of them, we were informed, had gone out leopard-hunting, some of those animals having devoured the best part of a fine young ox during the preceding night.

It seemed that the hunt was taking place right in our path, for towards evening we came up with a party of the Amaswarzis returning in triumph to their huts, carrying the carcase of a leopard upon a spare horse, and singing loud pæans of victory to their heathen goddess of the chase.

Before long we came up with the main body of the hunt, a party of some twenty or thirty stalwart young warriors, very well mounted, armed with spears, *assegais*, and bows and arrows, and wearing gay *krosses*, made of the skins of former spotted victims. They were halting in front of the glade through which we would have to pass, and begged that we would wait a little while, as their beaters were driving the game towards them, and we would frighten it away by going forward. We did as they desired, not a little from curiosity to see how they would act if lions or leopards came in their way. As they did not wish us to join in the hunt, preferring, I suppose, to make us passive witnesses of their prowess, which our guns would have taken from them, we simply loaded our rifles, and awaited the course of events.



A KAFFIR LEOPARD HUNT.

A tremendous baying of dogs and yelling of natives suddenly arose, and the warriors told us that it was their beaters, who, having surrounded the part where the game was supposed to be, were now driving it towards them. The deafening din approached nearer and nearer, and the warriors gathered themselves up all ready for a dash, when, just as we were beginning to think that we should see no sport, out bounded a couple of large leopards into the open glade.

Kicking the ribs of their horses with their bare heels, and taking a firm grip of their spears, the *braves* rushed forward upon the startled beasts, who instantly turned tail in the most recreant manner, and bounded back towards

the shelter of the bush. It was tame sport, for the feline brutes made no attempt to fight. One of them succeeded in escaping, but the other was transfixed through and through by the foremost hunter's spear. The rest of the hunt dashing up, poor leopard was soon put out of his pain, though, in order not to injure the skin, neither spears, *assegais*, nor arrows were used, but the heavy *knobkerries* kept whirling through the air and thudding about his body with a sickening sound, as he rolled over and over, clawing the ensanguined turf in his last agony. The Kaffirs, one and all, displayed a prudent dread of his long, sharp claws, and contented themselves with throwing their formidable clubs from a safe distance for some time, until the unhappy brute must have become, as the "long Yankee" concisely expressed it, "meat jam." The *knobkerrie*, made of very hard and heavy wood, about two feet long, and with a round head, three to four inches in diameter, is a very effective weapon in a native's hands, and is thrown with such force and accuracy as to often kill small animals, as antelopes, at a distance of twenty or thirty yards.

Not long after the last triumphant "Io" of the retreating Kaffirs died away in the distance, it came on to rain—to pour, rather, in torrents, in a way that one seldom sees far beyond the tropics. For four days and nights the very flood-gates of heaven seemed opened, and we began to feel rather anxious for a rainbow. Our young Teutonic comrade was seen to be diligently reading his Bible upon several occasions whilst this heavy and ceaseless rain-storm lasted, and I have a shrewd suspicion that his attention was entirely bestowed upon the ninth chapter of Genesis.

Our existence was wretchedly uncomfortable during those four days. The steady and persistent rain gradually managed to make nearly everything we possessed more or less damp, wet, and disagreeable. Although our waggon tents were usually waterproof, yet so long a time had elapsed since rain had fallen, and the constant exposure to a burning sun had made them so dry, that this sudden downpour found out many a leaky spot before the canvas took up. As soon as possible we picked out a camping place, beneath some huge "milk wood" trees, and then proceeded to pitch our tent, digging a ditch or trench around it, and spreading the fly to shoot off the water. This answered well enough, and the tent was perfectly water-tight, but then

so many of us passing in and out for various purposes, gradually made the inside almost as wet as the outside; besides which, even with oil-skins on, it was impossible to go to and return from the waggons, only a few yards off, without experiencing sundry strange sensations as of young rivers springing forth down the back of one's neck and up the sleeves of one's garments. Then we had to be going out every now and then to see that our Kaffirs were looking after the horses and oxen, and to attend to the cooking; and this last was a terribly arduous and vexatious undertaking. In order to keep a fire alight, we built a sort of bower with branches, beneath which we did the cooking. What with the thick and pungent smoke arising from the wet wood, and nearly blinding the unfortunate whose turn it was to watch and help the sable Tom, to which, every now and then, would be added a heavy stream of water upon the head, as weak parts of the umbrageous canopy were frequently found out, the caterer of the mess had a particularly unpleasant time of it.

On the evening of the fourth rainy day, Monsieur Louis became more religiously inclined than ever, and, after a long investigation of the Book which, ordinarily, he seldom troubled, began to talk about Noah and the Deluge, and the promise that a flood should not again destroy the world.

"Wal," said the "long Yankee," meditatively, between huge puffs of his black, disreputable-looking little pipe, "I don't know so much about that. The rains are mighty heavy out West, and people do say that they are becoming longer and longer, heavier and heavier, every year. Did you ever hear of Jabez Smidt, Dutchy?"

"Jabez Smidt? No, mein vriend, I did not hear ever anybodies talk of dat mans. Vat vas him pe?"

"Never heard of him! Wal, never heard of that celebrated and never-to-be-rivalled philosopher—your own countryman, too! The respected principal of our Chicago College. That great man has declared that the Deluge was caused by the operation of natural laws, the change of the earth's axis, and that the time would soon arrive when this sublunary sphere, having once more returned to that position, a similar catastrophe might be expected."

"There, that will do, Mister Will," exclaimed the fair Carlotta; "you are

going to tell us one of those stories of yours, so incredible that it takes forty men to believe them."

By the twinkle in our long comrade's eyes I knew that he was only treating Louis to a little sly badinage.

"Vell, put I dort, Misder 'Spread Eagle,' dat yesterday you say dis rain vas so same ast in der Vest—vas resemble der great rains in der Yankee pack-voods."

"What, resemble the rains out West! Not a bit of it; there's no more resemblance than there is between a fourpenny-bit and an earthquake. Out on the prairies it's true, when it comes on to rain you have to run for it, and mountains are in favour then; but, I'll tell you what, Dutchy, if this rain lasts another four days you'll just have to swim, that's all."

The laughter of the rest of us gave our simple Teuton an idea that Will was making fun of him, so he became sulky, and would not discuss the subject of rain and Deluge any further.

Although the tent was far more comfortable, yet we preferred sleeping in our respective waggons during this stoppage, leaving it to our Kaffirs, because we did not care to have them crawling, dirty, wet, and careless, about our goods, and they could not rest in their usual place, under the waggons, which had become soft, marshy, and permeated by numerous tiny but continually increasing rivulets.

Early on the morning of the fifth day of this compulsory halt we were aroused from our slumbers by the cries of our Kaffirs, three or four of whom were arousing us, and telling us to bring our guns, and come forth quickly.

In dire alarm, as may be imagined, at this startling and untimely summons, we sprang forth in every style of déshabillé, and armed with whatever weapons had come first to hand, in full expectation that the Amaswarzis, under their ruthless chief, Makushlar, were upon us.

Knowing that the natives never travel during the rain, we had neglected, for the first time since the fight, to keep up our system of watch and watch; in fact, the rain had made us so confident that we had not appointed a look-out of even one at a time since its commencement, but had all turned in every

night about nine or ten o'clock, as soon as we became tired of smoking and yarning in the tent.

This inspired us with double dread at the alarm, as we might be already in the power of the enemy.

Fortunately, nothing of the sort happened. When we scrambled out of the waggons, and then, finger on trigger, stood peering anxiously around, our natives explained the state of the case.

" No saar, no saar, no stop here. Come in de bush. Tom in de tree ; de kulu, kulukakulu umuntu-umrari inqe " (the great, immense " man-eater " eagle) " come ketch him, scoff " (eat) " him, fly away with him," cried our driver.

Then we saw that Tom was absent, and followed them as fast as possible into the forest.

We had not far to go. The yells of our unlucky servitor, who had got into trouble again, guided us ; and as we came to some large baobabs, about fifty yards from the encampment, we began to hear a strange noise of flapping, hissing, and crackling. Another yard or two and the cause was explained. There was our wretched boy, crouching and dodging about behind a branch of a tree, just beneath a large nest, whilst an immense eagle, one of full growth, of the largest species, and known to the Kaffirs as the " man-eater," was rushing and swooping at him, making savage and determined efforts to reach him with its sharp and formidable bill and claws.

" Shoot him, massa ! shoot him, massa !" yelled the dangerously-situated Tom, directly he saw us approach. " Hoo-oo-oo ! Shoot him quick, massa ! He ketch me d'rekly."

And we did shoot, bringing down the largest eagle I ever saw in my life. From tip to tip of its wings it measured no less than eight feet and a half. The feathers supplied our whole expedition with at least a month's food in the way of maize, sweet potatoes, onions, pumpkins, &c., for they were highly prized by the Kaffirs, who bartered anything for them.

The unhappy Tom had to be assisted down from the tree, when our driver took his place, clambered into the nest, and threw us out the young eaglets, all of whom died in a few days, being too small and feeble to rear by



TOM ATTACKED BY A "MAN-EATER" EAGLE.

hand. It appeared that our servants had seen the nest whilst looking for dry firewood, and, believing it to be deserted, had gone to search for a few of the highly-prized feathers that might have been left behind by the "man-eaters." After throwing stones and shouting, but without producing any sign of the presence of the old eagle and her young ones, our unfortunate Ganymede, I imagine, to show off his courage to his sable comrades, volunteered to climb up and search the nest. He had just reached the forking branches upon which it was built, when the formidable bird flew out and attacked him, putting his alarmed brethren in hasty flight to call upon us for help. I have but little doubt that Tom would have been killed, perhaps carried off and devoured, by that powerful bird, had it not been for the comparative safety of his position, right under the nest, and between the branches, which made it almost impossible for his strange and terrible assailant to reach him either with claws or beak; still, from the latter, he received two long and deep gashes, one on his right thigh, the other on his arm, and lost a good deal of blood—the very sight of which alone made him ill for a week afterwards.

Skeletons and putrid remnants of goats, calves, *oribe*, and many other animals were strewed plentifully about the nest and its neighbourhood, and the place must have been the home of the eagle for a long time. Although several of our party waited there for some hours, in expectation of getting a shot at the male bird, whose plumage, the Kaffirs said, was even better than that of our prize, they were disappointed, as he did not return.

These South African eagles must be very scarce, for this was the only one we ever killed, and, even at a distance, we did not see half a dozen during the whole period of my sojourn in the country. Unless well armed, either with gun or sword, a man would have no chance at all in an encounter with one of them, they are so large, fierce, and powerful. Our Kaffirs, and also many others whom we questioned, declared that the "umuntu-umrari" was well known to often kill, carry off in its claws, fly away with, and devour full-grown people. Of course, these native statements must always be received *cum grano salis;* nevertheless, in this case, I am inclined to believe them, for I am quite positive that the bird we shot could easily have executed any of the horrifying performances attributed to its family.

As to the precise species to which these dangerous eagles belong, I cannot give any information; I only know that they are at least twice the size of those found in Europe and the north of Scotland. There is a huge bald-headed vulture in South-Eastern Africa, even larger than this great eagle, but, if possible, still scarcer; we only saw about three specimens of it, and failed to secure any of them.

Although the rain had entirely ceased on the morning of the day upon which our adventure with the eagle occurred, yet we were not able to *trek* forward on our journey, in consequence of the softness of the ground, and the slipperiness of the clayey descents wherever the roads became hilly. So we had to remain encamped, and took advantage of the warm sun to dry all our wet things, as well as those that we had washed, for we had turned to, every one of us, at laundry work, by washing all our dirty clothes, during the preceding rainy days.

At this place we became acquainted with a singular little plant, to which we gave the name of "Kaffir tea." At an open spot, near to our encampment, several large patches of the strange vegetable were growing flourishingly. It rose to a height of about a foot and a half, with leaves and general appearance very similar to the flower known in England as the "stock." The same silvered green was the colour of the stalk and leaves, which were also hairy, or furred. The vegetable was more plant than flower, the tiny white blossoms it bore only appearing when it ran to seed. I had plucked a few of these plants, out of curiosity, and was examining them, when our driver, who was standing by, said—

"Dat tings berry good ukupuza" (drink), "massa. Berry good mooti" (medicine). "Allo same white man tea."

This interested me, and I questioned him further, eliciting the fact that the strange herb was very extensively used by the Kaffirs as a healthy, medicinal, and pleasant drink.

"Now," thought I, "here is an opportunity to have a bit of fun with and astonish my friends."

I found out that the decoction was made like tea, by pouring boiling water upon the leaves, and that, in colour, taste, and appearance, there was a strong resemblance. The driver also told me that when made very strong it

was a mild purgative. Telling him to collect some of the plants, and to take care that he did not make it too strong, I saw him prepare tea from it for all our party, instead of coffee as we mostly had at every meal. I was cook of the mess that day, and at noon, kettle in hand, entered the tent for tiffin.

The meal was commenced, the cups were filled, and the fair Carlotta, being first served, was the first to exclaim—

"Why, it is tea we have to-day. How is that, Mister Cook?"

"Oh," said I, mysteriously, "we can have it as often as we please. Very cheap, too. Only to gather it by the roadside."

By this time all hands had their curiosity aroused, and began to sip the beverage.

Besides coffee we had only brought one chest of tea with us, which had not yet been used or opened, but so very like to that popular "China drink, very odd in flavour, but good as food" (as quaint old Pepys called it), was my novel decoction, that every one, except my chum Roger, thought I had given them a change from the tea-chest. He, however, at once detected the same peculiarity which I had noticed when preparing the herb.

"By Jove!" he cried. "Why, it's wild tea. Where did you find it, old boy?"

"Oh, just outside the tent," I replied, placidly.

All hands ran to look, and I pointed out the silvery plant, to their no slight surprise.

Every one enjoyed the flavour of the beverage, and declared it to be remarkably like the famous production of "fair Cathay." Both I and Roger had often taken wild tea in China, and we thought that its taste was so exactly similar—possessing the same rather rough, slightly acrid, and coarse flavour—that it would be difficult to tell the one from the other, especially with the addition of milk and sugar.

This strong similarity of infusion was very singular, for there was not the slightest resemblance between the strange herb and the tea-plant. We often tried the "Kaffir tea" again, and we found that it possessed great

anti-febrifuge and stimulative properties. The natives drink large quantities of the decoction, as a precaution against fever, which all with whom we spoke upon the subject declared that it prevents.

Despite the fact that now and then we had a little disagreement and an occasional fracas with the Kaffirs, we could not deny that there was much to admire in their simple, primitive, and unsophisticated character. As a rule we found them not only friendly, but even reverent, in their behaviour to the exiled and strange *umlungos;* and, I venture to affirm that when the white men treat them with fairness and justice they never have cause to regret it. They are essentially hospitable, and a stranger could travel throughout Kaffir Land without the value of a penny-piece in his pocket, being sure of food and shelter wherever he went, always providing that he neither offended their prejudices nor came beneath the ban of *targarti*, their worst failing and their curse. This only applies to those who have not come into contact and intercourse with Europeans, for then, unfortunately, whilst acquiring the vices of the strangers, they lose their own simple, patriarchal virtues, and, too often, become cunning, selfish, hypocritical drunkards, generally immoral and degraded. Wherever I have travelled, in Asia, Africa, and America, I have utterly failed to observe any good result to the natives—any moral or intellectual improvement—from the boasted superiority of our civilisation and Christianity. Although, in the abstract, there can be no doubt whatever as to the far higher character of these, our professions, there is grave reason to believe that European individuals and small communities in distant, savage, and semi-civilised lands, make but poor apostles—communicate their vicious failings, and lamentably neglect either to teach or show their more virtuous nature. For my part—and I have not yet met with an unprejudiced traveller who did not agree with me—I infinitely prefer the native, be he never so wild and uncultivated, who has not seen a white man before his humble servant. In such an event, if you simply behave yourself, you are almost certain to obtain good and respectful treatment. Every mile that we travelled away from Natal added to this sort of experience. The further we left that colony behind the more friendly and hospitable did the natives become. I write now of the people *en masse*, not their chiefs and leaders, with whom, as a rule, any

trouble or quarrel arose, as, for instance, our difficulties with Ketchwayo and Makushlar. Next to *targarti*, the greatest evil beneath which the Kaffirs suffer is from the existence of their chiefs or hereditary rulers. The few striking exceptions only prove the rule. We found the Amazulus insolent and hostile ; the Amaswarzis less so (the fight being an exceptional affair) ; but the natives elsewhere beyond most friendly.

After "getting under weigh again," as Roger nautically expressed it, and *treking* away from where we had been caught by the heavy rain-storm, our way laid through a perfectly uninhabited tract of country, extending for more than fifty miles, between the Ukwena and Usabyao Rivers. It was the neutral ground, or No Man's Land, separating the Amaswarzi tribe from its hereditary enemies, the Umzielas, and upon it no members of either party dared risk their lives by venturing to dwell.

We were now quite safe from any attack by Makushlar, even had he still been disposed to make it, and so, once more, went comfortably forward on our journey, neither distressing our animals nor failing to keep a bright look-out for any auriferous indications.

This part of the country became less wooded, with short, thick grass, and a rocky nature again. The Drakensberg was now close by, within ten or twelve miles, and extending far away along the west. By our "dead reckoning"—that is to say, by consulting the compass course we had followed, and the distance we had travelled day by day—as well as by the appearance of the mountains, which Mr. Van Meyer was acquainted with, we knew that we were now in about the latitude of Lijdenburg, 24° 30′ S., the easternmost village or township of the Transvaal Republic. We had intended to spend our Christmas there, but, on riding forward to see what the pass through the Drakensberg was like, we found that the danger and difficulty of crossing and re-crossing it with our waggons would far more than outweigh any pleasure or necessity for going out of our way. So on we went, still due north, and on an exactly parallel course to the mountains on our left, at a distance of less than fifteen miles.

As we had to find a road, or, rather, a tract of country sufficiently clear and unencumbered to permit the passage of the waggons, two or three of us

mostly rode some distance ahead to pick out the way. One morning—the day before Christmas, and the twenty-seventh since our start from Natal—Louis, Roger, and myself were out in advance, and the former had galloped on in front, leaving my chum and I walking our horses leisurely along, whilst yarning of old times and present prospects, when, suddenly, we were surprised by his furious return. Urging his horse at full speed, and with his



QUARTZ FORMATION AT THE SABIA RIVER.

unkempt yellow locks floating on the breeze, our excitable young comrade dashed up to us, crying—

"Kom on, den! Kom on! Hundert tausand teufles! I have den vound der Ovir—der blace of ole Zolomans! Der ist in vront der river, mit der vite quvartz oll over der blace—der rocks quvartz, der hills quvartz, everyting quvartz!"

In response to his frantic appeals we rode forward with him, and soon

came up to the head waters of the Usabayo or Sabia River, and there, sure enough, saw quartz all over the place, as he had incoherently declared.

Red and white quartz, mixed with feldspar, cropped up in every direction ; in the river's bed, along its banks, and upon the adjacent hills ; in fact, some of the latter were composed of shining quartz alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Quartz Formation non-auriferous—Christmas Eve—Munjubar—How we spent Christmas Day—Dusky Belles for *Vis-à-vis*—Geological Features North of the Sabia—A Convoy of Slaves—Bovine Passion, Possessions, and Characteristics of the Kaffirs—Treatment of Native Women—We find an Old Man left to Perish in the Bush—Indecent Disposal of the Kaffir Dead—Arrive at the Chief, Umzielar's—His Appearance, and friendly reception of our Party.

OUR over sanguine Teutonic companion's surmise as to his having discovered the golden Ophir of the venerable Solomon proved to be extremely illusory. Gleaming red feldspar and glittering white quartz existed in abundance, from the northern bank of the Sabia River away towards the Drakensberg; and, in future, with only occasional exceptions, became the geological formation during the remainder of our journey north, and then west as far as the Tate or Tatin River.

Although we encamped for three days at the Sabia, and carefully prospected along its banks, as well as by blasting and chipping the quartz reefs, not a trace of gold could we find. This was the more provoking, as the residue left in our gold-washing pans always contained such indications as small, valueless garnets, "mundeck," coarse black sand, and angular pieces of pure magnetic iron ore—things that are invariably found in company with alluvial deposits of the precious metal. To counteract the promising character of these indications, the quartz itself was all of far too hard, pure white, solid, and thoroughly crystallised a nature to be auriferous, as that which contains gold is mostly more or less rotten, porous, veined, and discoloured by iron and various minerals.

One of the three days we spent at this place was devoted to keeping high feast and holiday. It was the Christmas Day of 1868. Instead, however, of the home adjuncts of snow, frost, and bitterly cold weather, our festival was held beneath the burning midsummer African sun, with the thermometer standing at about ninety degrees in the shade, under canvas. This, nevertheless, was weather far preferable to most of us—to all, in fact, except Monsieur Louis—than the cold, for we had spent many years of our

lives in hot countries, and had become accustomed to them. For myself, I never yet found any part of the world too hot, but I cannot endure anything approaching to the icy poles. Whilst Louis, poor fellow, was panting and blowing, in a state of semi-coma, semi-suffocation, with the heat, I and the others enjoyed the warmth and vivifying influence of the bright sun's rays with no little zest; whilst he pined and languished for the frigid temperature



OUR PROSPECTING FOR GOLD AT THE SABIA RIVER.

and glaciers of his native Switzerland, we felt joyous and animated in the glowing sunshine of this nearly tropic country.

Fortunately, some of the frontier *kraals* of the Umziolas were near at hand, from which, on Christmas Eve, we managed to obtain an abundance of fresh eggs and sweet milk for half a dozen of the defunct "umuntu-umrari's" feathers; so Christmas-pudding came to possess a favourable aspect in our imaginations. Before dusk all hands were busily at work, under the superin-

tendence of the fair Carlotta; raisins and currants were manipulated, suet chopped down fine, eggs beaten up light, preserved fruits and candies cut into mincemeat, and sundry strange culinary, not to say gormandising, preparations went merrily forward, beneath the watchful supervision of her bright blue eyes. These momentous feeding arrangements were brought to a termination by every one having the orthodox stir at the mighty plum-pudding monopolising our largest camp-kettle.

As our arrival had evidently caused considerable excitement amongst the inhabitants of the frontier Umziela *kraals* near by, and we had seen mounted men galloping off into the interior, we thought it advisable to keep a look out of two and two during the night, for it was uncertain what sort of a reception we might meet with.

Soon after daylight, and whilst most of our party were taking a delightful dip in a clear little creek which ran into the river, Miss van Meyer sent one of the Kaffirs to recall us, with the information that a large body of natives were advancing towards the waggons. Upon reaching our encampment, we saw at least two or three hundred warriors, about half of whom were mounted, coming forward in military array. In case they might prove hostile, we at once sent our servants to bring in the cattle and horses, whilst we prepared all our arms. When, however, the Umzielas had arrived within half a mile, the main body halted, and a small party came up to the waggons, a man in advance bearing the vegetable signal of peace.

A tall, powerful, and scarred warrior introduced himself as the chief Munjubar, commanding the Umziela frontier-guard, and expressed his desire to know our business, stating that his people were alarmed at our coming from the country of their enemies, the Amaswarzis. We soon satisfied him that our intentions were peaceful. We told him that we were proceeding on a hunting expedition; but, firstly, were on our way to pay a visit of peace and amity to his superior, Umzielar, chief paramount between the Sabia and Limpopo Rivers. Of course, we did not fail to make the most of our encounter with the *braves* of Makushlar, and this at once opened our interlocutor's heart to us, so that we soon became great friends. Laying aside their arms, the Umzielas came to fraternise, and soon the loud grunting "um-ums" of satisfac-

tion and approval rose up hoarse and guttural from the admiring circles formed around each of our natives, whom we had recalled from getting in the cattle, and who now waxed great and eloquent in dilating upon the heroic actions they had performed against their delighted listeners' enemies. Small boys were now sent off to the *kraals*, and soon numbers of women made their appearance, bearing huge jars of *shimyan* and *jwarlar*.

Considering that this was Christmas Day, and that we had a tremendous feast in course of preparation, I know not what would have been our fate had it not happened that the warriors were not troubled with any delicate scruples as to partaking of the good cheer provided for our entertainment. We just tasted their beer and spirits, and then the jars were soon all emptied by the very lengthy time which each Umziela hid his face behind them. We parted the best of friends, Munjubar retreating to his post further inland, and promising to provide us with guides and escort to his chief.

That was a merry Christmas we spent in the African wilderness ; and I have no doubt but that it was the first ever commemorated in those parts.

Our dinner was a grand affair. We had wild turkey or *paou*, antelope *à la Kaffir* (broiled over the fire), corned beef (thanks to the Amaswarzis), pumpkins, sweet potatoes, wild spinach, custards, mince-pies, and, above all, a rich and mighty plum-pudding. If that was not a feast for the wilderness, hundreds of miles beyond the pale of civilisation, I should like to know what is. Just as the great red sun began sinking towards the mountains in the west, and the approach of evening came to cool the heat of his burning noon-day rays, the dinner was spread out upon Nature's emerald table-cloth, and flasks of wine, reserved for rare occasions, were broached, whilst two black and square-faced bottles—upon which, every now and then, Louis, Mynheer and his son cast longing glances—stood like sentinels on either flank. The *fête champêtre* passed off admirably. What with the good things provided so bountifully for our use ; the fresh, soft air we breathed, free, pure, unconfined and uncontaminated ; and the rich, green foliage around ; the grand, illimitable blue overhead, the trusty friends by one's side, we did, indeed, enjoy ourselves. How stale, flat, and unprofitable seem the great cities of civilisation after this ! How cramped, confined, and stifling ! How sickly, artificial, and

unnatural! There is no life like that in the wilderness, deny it who may. In our huge deserts of brickwork man lives like a prisoned exotic in a hothouse; it is in the ever verdant wilderness of nature—"our thoughts as boundless and our souls as free"—that he feels the full vigour, joy, and exuberance of animal life.

And this reminds me that our Teutonic friend's exuberance of spirits very nearly caused him to make an irrational animal of himself upon that famous Christmas Day.

After the dinner we lighted up our pipes and cheroots, to enjoy a comfortable smoke and agreeable chat around the ruddy camp-fire; but, in the midst of the feast of reason and the flow of soul, Monsieur Louis was suddenly missed. I went in search of him, and, guided by a groaning, unhappy sort of noise, discovered him coiled up amongst his blankets in our waggon.

"Hallo! What are you doing here, eh? What's the matter with you?" I inquired, giving him a pull.

"Oh-h-h! Gust, mein poy, I tink so dat-dat-dat I scoff too mudch—eat do mudch blum-budding. Oh-h-h!" said he.

"Nonsense! Come along; get up. What do you mean by leaving us like that? Christmas Day, too," I urged.

"Oh-h-h. Mein sdomach ist zo pad mit der bain," he moaned.

Regardless of this, I dragged off his blankets, made him get out, take another "schnaps," and walk about for a little while, keeping my arm through his, and getting him to light up his most formidable pipe—a huge porcelain bowl, about four inches deep and two wide, with a very vivid picture of his native hills painted round the outside. Even this, the Dutchman's joy, failed for some time to soothe him, and he puffed away with a most unhappy expression of countenance, regardless even of the shouts of laughter he excited. The "long Yankee" ironically inquiring whether he felt like a boa constrictor, advising him to jump about a bit, and trying to urge upon us the necessity to roll him.

However, our imprudent plum-pudding eater was well enough to take part in the grand *al fresco* ball and concert that night. The amusements passed off very creditably, and to the intense delight of the natives from the

neighbouring *kraals*, who assembled round about us one and all—from the oldest inhabitant to the youngest child—having, I believe, received from our servants the intimation that we were keeping the *umlungo's* high day and holiday. The fair Carlotta was in great request when the dancing began. It was a pity there were no more ladies, though we managed to get along very well with two or three dusky belles, selected from the admiring concourse, whose delight now became perfectly frantic. It was really wonderful how quickly the Kaffir girls picked up both step and time ; before the dancing had terminated they could do the quadrilles, and even waltz as well as some of our party, who were not at all conspicuous for general lightness or elegance of carriage. The gratification of the Kaffirs was supreme, and their applause became perfectly deafening when they saw us dancing with their dusky daughters, and beheld how well the latter succeeded in acquiring the strange new saltatory exercises of the superior white man. It was late the next morning when we arose.

After spending two days in "prospecting" the adjacent country, we moved forward again, accompanied by half a dozen warriors, whom Munjubar had sent to escort us to his chief.

The Drakensberg Mountains, on our left, now seemed to terminate in a succession of low hills, which retreated to the west ; but although spurs from that range no longer came to interrupt our way, the ground became so rocky, and the rugged ridges of quartz and feldspar so frequent, that we were obliged to make a détour more to the east. By doing this we soon left the igneous formation, the ridges, rocks, and hills, which we ascertained retreated to the west in a large semicircle, the intervening country being of a low, alluvial nature, and presenting every appearance of having once been covered by the ocean, which probably flowed up to the hills. The soil was sandy, and, wherever watercourses or gullies intersected it, we saw innumerable small white sea-shells, of the cockle species, and such as are found all along the Mozambique and south-east African coast ; besides which, at places where the bed-rock was exposed, we found it a flattened, decayed, and porous sandstone, evidently worn and formed into hollows by the action of water.

This extensive tract of country was almost without bush or tree, but was



THE SLAVE CONVOY.

covered with a rich thick grass. One night, whilst outspanned, and having a smoke after supper, before turning in, we saw, in the bright moonlight, a convoy of wretched captives proceeding towards the coast, to be sold as slaves.

It was a miserable sight. Tied by the neck, two and two, burdened with the guns and goods of their captors, foot-sore and weary, the poor wretches toiled along. There were men, women, and children amongst them, but mostly the former, for we heard that the good-looking young women had been already disposed of amongst the Umzielas, for oxen. The escort consisted of both Kaffirs and Arabs—the latter, I suppose, being slave-dealers from Zanzibar or Mozambique. The poor captives were all of the Baroka tribe, whose land extends upon the north-east so-called boundary of the Transvaal Republic, and had been caught during a raid by Umzielar. It was a long

and mournful train. There were at least two hundred of the unfortunates, and I shall long remember the imploring glances they turned upon us when we went outside our encampment, and stood silent, though indignant, to see them pass by. Of course, it was impossible for us to help the poor slaves in any way ; but I think they must have seen that we pitied them. Now and then one of them would speak to us, but the brutal guards quickly drove their wretched victims along, so that we could ascertain but few particulars. From the direction in which they were being taken, we concluded that they would strike the sea-coast a short distance south of the mouth of the Zambesi river.

Upon every " knoll-koppie " of the Boers, or rising ground, throughout this extensive plain, we found large and densely-populated *kraals;* whilst the rich pasture supported numerous herds of cattle. Here, as, indeed, throughout Kaffir Land, it seemed to us that the principal enjoyment of the old men was to stand leaning upon the fence of their *kraal*, in the morning, before the cattle were let loose, and in the evening, after they had been gathered together, admiring this, their almost only, and horned, property. For hours the old fellows will stand, with their arms folded, gazing affectionately upon their pounded kine, their whole soul in their gaze, and their minds entirely occupied with the absorbing spectacle, just as one might expect to behold some avaricious miser gloating over his gold.

As previously stated, the Kaffirs have scarcely any other marketable property besides their cattle. Ivory, ostrich feathers, and hides, where they happen to possess those articles, are traded off to the white man ; amongst themselves they buy and sell with oxen, and barter a little with such things as sticks, *assegais*, *krosses*, or ornaments ; money, of course, they know not. The sole object, business, and purpose of a Kaffir's life is to accumulate cattle; his daughters obtain these, and his sons look after them. It cannot be said that they are troubled with either multiplication of occupations or diversity of existence. No matter how numerous their herd may be, they never count it, yet they would miss one quite as quickly, for each animal is perfectly well known and identified to them by some peculiarity of mark or colour ; this is only an instance of uncultivated mental simplicity—of instinct, or perception by sight, versus knowledge by science or calculation.

It was only in Natal that we found the value of the young and sable Venuses exorbitant. Everywhere else the average price of a buxom damsel, from fourteen years of age to about twenty-five, was five to seven head of cattle. The first cycle of feminine value seemed to be the ten years after puberty; the elder maidens being considered as inferior stock, not worth more than three or four good cows a head. We may safely reckon six fine oxen as the price for an ordinary young and sound wife, which the dingy Benedict cannot surely deem too much for an article that will till his fields, feed him, and pay, moreover, a large profit upon the original investment for her, by the future sale of daughters she may bear to her lord and master. The daughters of chiefs, or famous beauties, that is to say, belles renowned for their size and weight, command, of course, an exceptional equivalent in the way of beef.

After all, the treatment of women in Kaffirdom, as in other polygamist countries, is not nearly so bad as we, from our totally opposite stand-point, are apt to imagine. There is usually much expressive philanthropy, virtuous indignation, and exaggeration in our estimates of those who happen to be so unfortunate as to differ from our righteous selves, especially when they are what we delight in calling savage and uncivilised races. Thus, however much we may pity the Kaffir women, and deplore their lot, they do not seem to experience the slightest feeling of wrong, suffering, or ill-treatment. In fact, my experience goes to prove that, were what we consider their wrongs to be redressed, they would not only deem themselves insulted, but injured, by the innovation. As an instance of this, I may mention that once, in Natal, at a Mr. Besley's sugar-plantation on the Ifafa River, I saw a Kaffir made to relieve his wife of the huge pot of treacle she was carrying balanced on her head. He did as the white people ordered him without the slightest symptom of ill-will or disagreement, but it was very different with the stout matron, whose dusky countenance expressed no little indignation and contempt. Out of curiosity I followed this couple, and, sure enough, as soon as they had turned a corner of the road, and were out of sight of the mill, my conjectures were verified, for the massive lady called to her spouse, who was trotting along very contentedly with the treacle, and, in peremptory tones, ordered him to put it

down. At this moment I appeared upon the scene, when the wife pretended to have no desire to take the burden, until I asked if the man was her "umfarzi" (wife). Then she at once fired up, and asked what the *umlungos* at the mill meant by the insult they had cast upon her? Was she an "ingane" (infant)? she sarcastically inquired, lifting up, with pride, and for my edification, an arm whose biceps measured at least eighteen inches in circumference. Was her "indoda" (husband) a boy? No, he was an "ibuto" (warrior), and she was his head "umfarzi." Whereupon she indignantly vindicated her outraged rights, by seizing upon the treacle-pot, and, with one jerk of her brawny arms, elevating it upon her head, and bearing it off in triumph.

I always make a point of studying the habits, character, and peculiarities of the people I travel amongst, and am quite certain, from frequent observation, that the Kaffir women do not feel the slightest hardship in their lot, and are very far from repining at it. I never yet found fault with their domestic *régime* but that the women were the first to dispute my opinions, and maintain as rights what I condemned as wrongs. If it be true that a woman's tongue is her sword, certainly the Kaffir ladies do not allow it to rust; they well know how to take their own part in any domestic squabbles, although, when they become too aggravating and outrageous, their *indoda* is apt to keep them in order by a knock on the head with his *knobkerrie.* Even this sort of thing they seem to deem a proper conjugal proceeding, as illustrating a sufficient respect for their position and importance; and, I fancy rather like it, morally, than otherwise.

Although the women and children do all the field work, we noticed this peculiarity, there is no such thing as family community of interest. A certain portion of the fields under cultivation is considered as belonging to the husband, but then every member of the family also has his or her share; the produce and proceeds belonging strictly individually to the owners, and not collectively. This is a system that must tend to make the people selfish and uncharitable.

Upon the extensive and almost level alluvial plain at which we had arrived after crossing the Sabia River we were able to travel along with our waggons at the rate of nearly twenty miles a day. Within a week we reached

the large *kraal* of the paramount chief, Umzielar, near the confluence of the Lepalule, or Oliphant, and Limpopo rivers.

Only the day before arriving at the chief's, we experienced one of those painful incidents which show savage character in the worst light.

We had crossed the plain, and were once more upon the same geological formation as existed at the other side, whilst bush and trees were pretty thickly scattered over the country. Shortly after breakfast, and whilst the waggons were inspanning for another *trek*, I and the "long Yankee" walked on, gun in hand, to try and knock over a few *koran*, or black pheasants, for our dinner, at an extensive thicket some little distance ahead. We had bagged one of those birds, and a couple of brace of wild pigeons, when we fancied that a faint groaning sort of sound came from amongst a clump of banyan trees in the bush. As we advanced to this spot there was a great rustling amongst the leaves, grass, and dead wood, as though numerous small animals were scampering away. Another moment, and we beheld a sickening, fearful sight—a scene that I trust it may never be my lot to witness again. A very old and withered man, a Kaffir, who must have lived at least eighty or ninety years, was stretched on the grass before us. A tattered blanket was partly around him, a large jar of water, and a basket that had once contained provisions, stood near his head; but, horrible to relate, and ten times more so to behold, that yet breathing skeleton, so worn, shrivelled, and decrepid, had been gnawed by rats wherever a little trace of flesh had existed, and the eyes of the miserable wretch had been eaten out.

"My God!" exclaimed my comrade, in a paroxysm of horror. "What is this? What means this horrible sight?"

And the "long Yankee," excited to a degree that I had never seen before, knelt wildly down by the side of that frightful object, produced his spirit-flask, but started up again without putting it to the helpless and hapless sufferer's lips? No, they were gnawed off, too!"

"We cannot do anything for him," I said, replying to my friend; "the poor old fellow will soon be beyond all human aid. He has been carried to the bush, and left here to die, being helpless from great old age, and a burden to the people of his *kraal*."

"Yes, I guess, old boy, you're right," muttered Will, painfully and meditatively. "The savage is the same all over the world. Our Indians act with the same revolting cruelty when their old people become utterly helpless and won't die. I have met the remains of victims so abandoned—the water jar and other things proving it, as in this case—in our backwoods; but I was not aware that the Kaffirs did the same."

However, there was no doubt about the case, as our natives directly agreed, when the waggons came up, and we stopped the party by commucating our painful discovery.

We knew not what to do. To help the unfortunate was impossible; nothing could be done to alleviate his sufferings, even if he were not too far gone and exhausted to feel any. Will two or three times thought of releasing him from his terrible state by shooting him through the head, which would have been the best thing to do, under the circumstances; but he could not execute the idea.

All that we did was to remain at the spot until the poor old man expired, so that the rats should not come to devour him again while yet alive. He died at about ten o'clock that night, and it was wonderful how, in that horrible state, life remained so long. At daylight in the morning we dug a shallow grave, covered up those poor mortal remains in their last long home, and went on our way, our reflections not being very favourable to the "noble savage."

Besides this inhuman treatment of the very old and decrepid—which, however, must by no means be considered frequent—another of the worst traits of Kaffir character is the indecent treatment and callous way in which they dispose of their dead. So far as our experience went, we could not ascertain the existence of such a thing as a regular burial-place at any part of the country we visited. When a person dies, the natives just carry the corpse to the nearest bush, thrust it into a hole, or throw it into a river, without any ceremony whatever. Some tribes, it is true, collect the bones of their distinguished dead, and keep them in large earthen jars, but they form the exception; whilst nearly all swear by and worship—very slightly and vaguely—the bones of their chiefs and ancestors. Although they seem to

possess some very faint and indefinite idea as to the immortality of the soul and a future state of existence; in practice, by the way in which they act towards one who dies, they tacitly agree with the atheist's cynicism that "another dog is dead."

We met with a very friendly reception from the powerful chief, Umzielar. Runners, it seemed, had been despatched to him by Munjubar, announcing our coming; and, they, no doubt, greatly and vividly magnified and embellished our fight with the Amaswarzis, so that we were received more like allies returning in triumph than strangers arriving in ignorance—more like old friends and brothers-in-arms coming home from victory over our mutual enemies, than unknown travellers, perfectly unacquainted with and indifferent to our entertainers. The royal Umzielar was a shrewd, intelligent-looking man, over sixty years of age, with grey wool, and a slight snowy-white moustache and tuft upon his chin. In his prime he must have been a splendid specimen of a Kaffir athlete, and even now he would have been a formidable antagonist in a personal encounter. He stood fully six feet high—within a shade of the "long Yankee's" dimensions—with a compact, splendidly-proportioned figure, and an immense muscular development. His state dress consisted of a peculiar scarlet cloth hood, a fine red blanket, cut and worn as a *poncho*, with a "medicine bag," or *fetish* regal insignia, round his neck.

Like another Abdalonymus, he was called from the humble occupation of a poor tiller of the soil (by the hands of his wives, though) to the dignity of a —well, hardly throne, for Kaffirs don't use such superfluous things, but to the supreme chieftainship of the Umziela tribe. Like that ancient worthy, too, he was of royal descent, being a younger son of the celebrated chief, Shoshongaan; but no great Alexander aided his promotion, it was the Boers who, by supplying him with guns and powder, assisted him to supplant the last chief, his elder brother, Maswerwar, a sanguinary tyrant, whose cause being espoused, though unsuccessfully, by the Amaswarzis, led to the enduring enmity between the two tribes. It was the Boers, also, who, having encouraged him to kidnap "orphans" for their service in the Transvaal Republic, had given him a passion for slave-hunting.

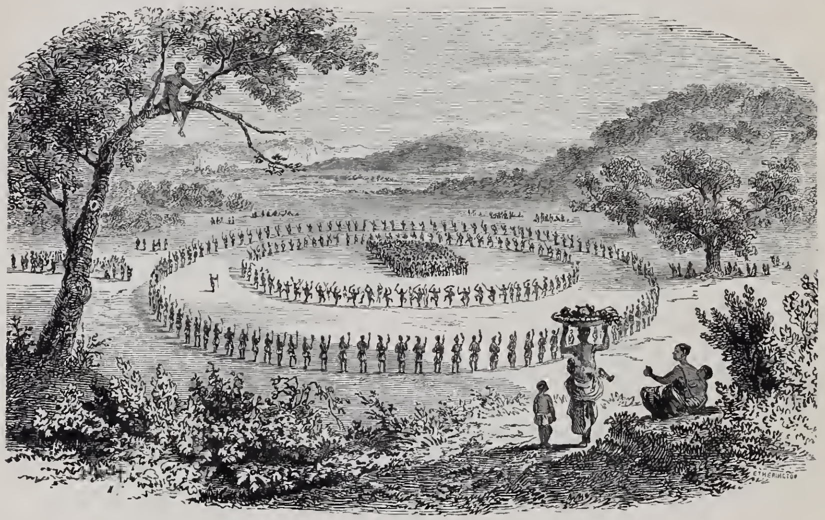
The great *kraal* was built along the summit of a steep and elevated ridge,



THE CHIEF UMZIELAR.

which formed a natural position of considerable strength. As we could not ascend this place with our waggons, we outspanned upon a grassy plain about half a mile distant; and here the chief, with a force of some five or six hundred stalwart warriors, waited to receive us. This reception was a regular ovation.

As soon as we came in sight, the warriors were mustered into a dense and solid square, by Umzielar in person. Then, amidst a tremendous din from Kaffir drums and war-horns—the latter composed of enormous bullock-horns, and the former, much like the Hindostanee *tum-tum*, of skin stretched over the hollow section of a small tree—a formation of two large circles, one within the the other, was made around the square; and between the two extensive rings



DANCE OF THE UMZIELAS.

the chief himself walked alone, round and round, leading, and beating time for the impressive war-dance, with a long and curiously-carved stick. The excited dancers accompanied their violent exercise and devotion to the shrines of the Kaffir Mars and Terpsichore with their voices. What with the hollow rumbling of the drums, the melancholy howling of the horns, and the hoarse roaring of the warriors, a most deafening din was made in our honour, and echoed with prolonged reverberation amidst the surrounding hills.

CHAPTER XV.

Hopes of Ophir—A Ruse to Prospect the Umziela Country—The Damsels Lungarzi and Emshlopeiligugu—Prospecting Plans—The Natives' Surprise at our White Skins—A Delicate and Embarrassing Situation *à la Iquoqa*: How we Escape from it—The "long Yankee" and Myself refuse to become Kaffirs, and Reject an Offer of the Chief's Daughters in Marriage—Game on the Limpopo—A Perilous Adventure with Rhinocerotis: Kaffir Rejoicing at our Victory—Singular Hills near the Limpopo River.

FINDING that we were so well received by Umzielar, we determined to spend some days in his neighbourhood, as the surrounding country presented the strongest auriferous indications that we yet had seen, and we were now well into the Monomotapa, Sofala, and Ophir regions of the ancient geographers.

At first we were rather puzzled as to how it would be possible to go out prospecting, for the Umzielas were so friendly, and so many of them were always visiting our encampment, that there was not a chance to pursue our search for gold without their knowledge. Fortunately, by taking advantage of a trifling incident, we were not only enabled to prospect openly as much as we pleased, but were assisted by as many natives as we chose.

After we had outspanned, and the ovation with which we were received had terminated, we all accepted the chief's pressing invitation to visit his *kraal*, to partake of *jwarlar* and refreshments. Various kinds of cakes, made of Kaffir corn, maize, and milk, eggs and green mealies, were produced, whilst fowls and a bullock were killed for a feast. During our stay in Umzielar's hut—a large and spacious dwelling of mud and thatch about thirty feet in diameter—we noticed that his two favourite daughters wore gold earrings and golden rings through their nostrils. This little event raised our hopes, and made us fancy that we might be getting near to Ophir, and on the right road for it after all. These auriferous aspirations were, howerer, quickly blighted. The following is the substance of a conversation I had with Umzielar on the subject—

"Your daughters wear gold" (isokela); "I suppose you obtain it from mines in your lands," I observed, cautiously, and assuming indifference.

"Yes, it is gold they wear—the bright yellow stuff that never fades. They are good girls—handsome girls—I wish we had more of it for them; it looks better than brass or beads, but it comes from a long way, far, far off, many days march to the north and west" (umzantsi and ichonalangar—sunset).

At this moment the "long Yankee" whispered to me—

"Tell him you think there's gold in his territory, and see how he takes it."

This was a cunning idea, and I acted upon it.

"Why, chief," I continued, "it is strange that you should obtain the golden ornaments from so far, when the stuff exists, I think, in your own country."

"Mar-me! Pi-na?" (where)? said he, seeming slightly interested.

"That I cannot tell, chief. But the rocks—the emshlope lecher" (white stones)—"all about your land are of the same nature as those which contain gold in other countries."

"Um. Well, perhaps it is better to leave it alone, to let it remain in the stones, or we should have all our women neglecting their duties to look about for it, in order to obtain ornaments," replied Umzielar, sententiously.

Just then a happy thought occurred to me, so I said—

"Ah, that could be prevented by the *indodas;* but think how much powder and how many guns you could buy from the white men, who value it more than ivory, and who would then come to trade with you for it!"

This little device succeeded, and Umzielar himself proposed the very thing we wanted—that we should search for the precious metal in his country.

The chief's two favourite daughters, Lungarzi and Emshlopeiligugu ("fair gem," is the meaning of this latter damsel's sonorous and euphonious designation, I believe), were very fine young girls; the former about nineteen years of age, and her sister somewhere near seventeen. They were tall, graceful and very well proportioned. Both were as nearly as possible of the same height, about five feet six or seven inches; and were of a very fair complexion for their race, especially the youngest—"Gugu," as she was called for brevity—who was not much darker than a mulatto, and whose colour was a fine sample of the rich, warm, ruddy, and tawny hue already mentioned in a

previous chapter as one of the most pleasing physical attributes of the Kaffir. Both were good-looking, beauties in fact, according to the higher and anti-ponderous order of native taste ; but Gugu certainly carried off the palm, for hers was an oval-shaped, and girlish, innocent-looking face, with well-formed chin and mouth, and large, expressive eyes, black and lively as those of the



LUNGARZI.



EMSHLOPEILIGUGU.

wild gazelle ; whilst Lungarzi's full and prominent lips were a serious fault in our estimation, though, no doubt, preferred by her countrymen. They wore their long wool in the peculiar, cone-shaped, plaited custom in vogue amongst the Umzielas ; all the ends being tied together at the top of the head, whilst a fringe of little curls was left hanging down over the forehead and all around. Their teeth, of course, were splendid—firm and regular, clean, pure, and white

as the driven snow. All the Kaffirs have magnificent ivories, and, I believe, simply because they are cleanly in their habits of feeding, and invariably cleanse their teeth and thoroughly rinse their mouths with water after eating.

In order to prospect the surrounding country as quickly and as extensively as possible, we divided ourselves into three parties; Roger and the two Van Meyers moving to the north-west with their waggon, and establishing their head-quarters about five or six miles off; Louis and Tom Ashwell proceeding an equal distance to the south-west with our waggon; whilst I and the "long Yankee" remained at the *kraal*, and examined the country to the eastward. We were lodged by ourselves, with our boy Tom, in one of the chief's huts, and each party was assisted in its prospecting work by a corps of twenty Kaffirs. Our blankets were spread over some rush mats upon the clean and firmly-cemented floor of the hut, whilst Tom prepared the meals ready for our return from gold-hunting, and looked after the eatables and drinkables taken from the waggons—not that there existed any danger of theft, for, throughout Kaffirdom, you only have to place your property in the charge of the head of a *kraal* to make it as safe as it would be in the Bank of England. Altogether we made ourselves very comfortable in Umzielar's town, and nothing could exceed the kindness with which we were treated.

The chief, and some of his warriors had seen white men (as represented by the Boers, or Africanders) before, but by far the majority of the people never had, and to them we were objects of no little interest. Every evening, after our return from prospecting, and when we had finished dinner, our hut became thronged with a curious and admiring concourse of sable visitors, young and old, male and female. It appeared that they were acquainted with the Portuguese (having, very likely, had many a slave transaction with them at their colonies along the Mozambique and south-east coast), but they used to say—

"Wow! Mar-me! These *are* white men. The Portuguese call themselves white, but they are red."

When they found out that our arms and chests were even whiter than our faces they became very anxious to see the whole of our bodies, but this, we

gave them to understand, was contrary to *umlungo* habits ; and although we signally failed to make them comprehend the decorum and sense of muffling ourselves up in clothes, yet the dusky damsels refrained from teasing us to become even as themselves in the way of déshabillé when they knew that we did not exactly like it.

Of course, living as we were, it was only natural the chief's family and ourselves should see a great deal of each other, and we soon entertained mutual feelings of regard with all save two members of the royal blood, and they, alas ! were the most charming of the lot—the pretty Gugu and her sister. Even the "long Yankee's" strong anti-sable prejudices became mollified, and one evening he confidentially informed me that—

"After all, old hoss, the 'nigger' 'aint so bad ; there's something in him. But then"—and he qualified the former opinion—"the Kaffirs are not regular niggers, you know ; only half-and-half."

However, the intimacy that became established between ourselves and Umzielar's family led to one *mal-aventure*, and placed us in a by no means slightly embarrassing situation.

Lungarzi and Gugu seemed either to be appointed or to have voluntarily constituted themselves our especial guardians and attendants, and it soon led to serious results. Morning and evening they used to bring us cakes, fresh milk, and green mealies, and as, according to Kaffir etiquette, they often took upon their fair selves the task of feeding us, they were not infrequently brought into near contact and dangerous proximity to the much admired white skin of the pale-faced strangers from afar. Whether it were the grand passion, love, or only an awkward freak of that strange influence men know as animal magnetism, I decline to positively affirm, but, certain it is that our two young and feminine acquaintances chose to conceive a tender attachment for us.

This, perhaps, would not have mattered so much; but finding that sighs, tender glances, touches of the hand, &c., did not create any corresponding manifestations upon our part, those amorous and voluptuous dusky Venuses proceeded to a more positive and unmistakable demonstration of affection.

One night, the eighth or ninth of our visit, we had been dancing with the girls and young men, as usual, round about the *kraal*, and had met with

much applause for our performances with the chief's daughters, whom we had already taught to waltz and gallop, when the troublesome crisis arrived. Perhaps it was the effect of our arms embracing their waists, as we whirled together round and round in the clear, full moonlight—that soft, seductive, shadowy light, so fatal to tender hearts—that overpowered their feelings, and brought about the, to us, unexpected and highly embarrassing *dénouement.* At all events, that very night, shortly after we had finished our pipes, put out the light, and rolled over to go to sleep, in fact, just as I was dozing off, my comrade startled me by crying out—

"Hollo, here! what's up? What the deuce is it? Who are you? Funarni nar?" (What do you want?)

But, even at the same moment, as I opened my eyes, and was on the point of getting up to see what was the matter, I heard a soft step, and the next instant felt some one lying down by my side, and gently trying to get underneath my blanket. Then, as I stretched forth a hand, which encountered the warm and rounded form of a young woman, Will continued—

"Jehos—whew! A woman, by Jupiter! Get away, yer black hussy! Hoy! Jump up, old boy; jump up and strike a light! Here's a naked nigger gal after me!"

"Well, don't make such a row about it," I replied, sitting up to strike a light, despite the gentle effort which two small hands made to restrain me. "You're not alone. I'm in the same fix."

And with that I struck a match, lighted the candle in our lamp, and found the buxom young Gugu timidly trying to share my blanket, whilst her sister was kneeling in an attitude of confusion and uncertainty over against my comrade.

The sable Thomas, in the meanwhile, went on snoring away like an asthmatical hippopotamus, at his corner of the hut.

Gazing at each other for a moment with an air of comical embarrassment, we both began to laugh uproariously, but our merriment soon subsided, and we became serious when we saw the painful confusion of the young intruders, and the mutely beseeching expression of the furtive glances they cast upon us, in a timid, bashful sort of way. The light seemed to overwhelm them with

shame, and they crouched down, still and immovable, like statues of ebony, without knowing what to do, and striving to hide their faces with their hands.

We knew quite sufficient of the Kaffir character to be well aware that the intrusion of the poor girls was innocent enough, and that they meant no wrong. But then we knew, also, that it was the custom termed *iquoqa*—a confession of love, strange and embarrassing enough to us, yet not without its counterpart in Wales and other civilised places. There was now, unfortunately, no doubt but that the damsels had taken to heart and in earnest the trifling attentions we had paid them since our arrival, and this, to our horror, was the unsophisticated, orthodox way in which they intended to acknowledge and prove to us that our attachment was reciprocated. The matter would have been bad enough in the case of common girls, but here we were, involved in a matrimonial difficulty with the powerful paramount chief's favourite daughters! Worse than all, we knew well enough that they would not have ventured to enter our hut *à la iquoqa*, but with the consent of their parents. The custom is a strange one, sure enough. By sleeping at the side of her lover—*en règle*, with all her unmarried sisters in the same hut—a Kaffir maiden accepts his suit, after which they are considered as betrothed. The peculiar institution may be indelicate enough, but very seldom, if ever, leads to any improper consequences; so "evil be to him who evil thinks."

After our merriment had subsided, we sat staring at each other, and then at the young girls, in a sort of mental fog, without speaking, and without experiencing the faintest, vaguest idea of what to do.

"Chaps, let's smoke," sententiously observed my comrade, at last, when the long silence and the awkward situation had become almost unbearable.

And we did smoke, filling our pipes, puffing away, and thinking fiercely how to get out of the scrape.

We did not like to turn the tender-hearted damsels away, and yet to allow them to remain with us was out of the question—not that their characters would have suffered, even had Tom not been present, the lamp alight, and the door open, but because we should have become fully pledged to marry them.

A fortune-teller once, in Epping Forest, many years ago, obtained from the writer hereof certain current coin of the realm in exchange for her blarney. Strangely enough, she told me that I should be a considerable traveller by land and water; she also affirmed that it would be my fate to marry a black princess. Well, all I can say is that, on this occasion, I began to believe in fortune-telling, and thought of giving in, submitting gracefully to manifest destiny and a dusky better-half, when, lo! that man of many resources, our ingenious Yankee, cunningly discovered a means by which we could escape from the difficulty.

I had just inquired from poor Gugu whether they had visited us with their father's permission, and had, as I fully expected, received an affirmative reply, when my friend cried—

"Eureka! Yes, that's the ticket, and no blooming error, my boy. I'll just sham sick, d'ye see. Cramp in the innards. Roll about, kick about, and holler a few; that'll bring the hull *kraal* around us, and so, ef this child calculates correctly, we'll kind of circumambulate these nigger nymphs, who think they're going to marry white men right off, *nolens volens*."

I applauded the idea immensely, and began to despise old Mother Red-hood again.

The "long Yankee" began to groan and wriggle about, so I told poor Gugu that he had been very ill during the day, and begged her to go and bring me some *shimyan* for him. The ruse succeeded famously. After a short whispered consultation, both sisters went to obtain the ardent spirit, hastened, no doubt, by the appalling contortions and terrific outcries in which my ingenious friend began to indulge. The tremendous noise he made set the village curs a-barking, and soon, one by one, the natives came dropping in, a scared expression on their dingy faces, and anxious to ascertain what might be the matter. At first they feared that a snake had bitten the writhing and yelling *umlungo*, but I soon made them understand that it was his stomach that was out of order. I am sure they must have believed that he was very ill indeed, for, in his desperate struggles, he managed to make his long limbs fly about in a most terrifying manner, cleverly bestowing a few hearty kicks upon the same part of several of the bystanders as that wherein

he was himself supposed to be enduring torment. The result of it was that, after Umzielar and many of his people had been aroused, alarmed, and placed in anxious suspense for half an hour or so by my companion's cleverly-assumed illness; and after the two medicine-men or doctors of the *kraal* had woven strange spells and incantations around him—receiving the hardest kicks when they ventured too near—he pretended to recover, and, with a big jar of the best *jwarlar*, we were left alone for the remainder of the night.

As soon as the last native had left, we fastened up the door of the hut, lighted up our 'bacca again, and proceeded to consult upon our future course.

The chief had already thrown out pretty broad hints as to our remaining with him, and casting in our lot with his; and we could not but think that the *iquoqa* business was part and parcel of a friendly scheme to secure our consent. We had severely beaten his most deadly enemies, he had heard of our formidable guns, and had been astounded with a short example of their range and rapidity of fire. Besides this, we had displayed our knowledge in the finding of the precious metal that could buy him similar weapons; so that, altogether, the astute old Umzielar had sufficient motives to desire our residence and alliance with himself, even at the expense of his two favourite and handsomest daughters. Moreover, we had become very friendly with him and his people; and, perhaps, he may have considered that our slight attentions showed an incipient affection for the girls, which only required fomenting, when their far-famed charms and fascinations would effectually detain us in the bonds of love and marriage.

We had done all the prospecting that we intended—obtaining no trace of gold, though every concomitant indication was present—so at once decided that the only thing to do was to rejoin the waggons without delay.

In the morning we sent Tom off to them, with instructions to communicate the state of affairs to our comrades, ascertain the result of their prospecting, and bring back word whether they were ready for a start.

About noon that day we were invited to a state council or *durbar*, in Umzielar's hut, and, as we expected, received the offer of his daughters

in marriage, with a pressing invitation to remain with him and join his tribe, as chiefs of the highest rank, inferior only to his own regal dignity.

We could not help being affected at the sincere good-will, friendship, and high esteem with which these offers were made to us. In simple, terse, and honest language, Umzielar called upon us to consider the proposal and make answer. It was not entirely without feelings of regret that we declined, and gave our disappointed audience to understand that our ties, connections, and engagements in our own country were such as would compel us to return upon the termination of our present expedition.

No opposition was made to the course we selected, but no little sign of chagrin was visible upon the countenance of the chief and his head men. However, we made a sort of compromise by agreeing to visit him again, if possible, and by undertaking to prospect all along our road through his country for gold, a party of Umzielas being appointed to accompany us, some of whom would also remain with, and, as *amanxusa*, or royal messengers, introduce us to the next tribe to the north.

By dusk that night, in response to our intimation, and not having discovered any auriferous inducement for a further halt in the neighbourhood, the waggons arrived at the foot of the rising ground on which the *kraal* was built, and our friends came to bid the chief good-bye, and take us away with them. Although concealed beneath their dress, we could yet notice that they carried their revolvers and "bowies," and were, in fact, armed to the teeth. It was not without pleasurable surprise that they learnt the matter was already arranged, and that we but awaited their arrival to depart.

When it came to their turn to bid us good-bye, large tears rolled from the eyes of poor Gugu and her sister. We had scorned their love—had blighted, perhaps, the budding of their young affections—and, with a bravely stoical attempt, they strove to restrain their grief. No sooner, however, had we turned our backs, and began descending the hill, than their fortitude quite gave way, and their sorrow burst forth in loud cries of "Mar-yeh! Mar-yeh!" (Alas! Alas!), followed by the loud, long, and peculiarly melancholy-sounding wail with which the native women so affectingly express their grief.

Nevertheless, on we went, knitting our brows and compressing our lips,



GAME ON THE LIMPOPO.

with resolution and determination, for to return would only make the trouble worse; but the "long Yankee" whispered to me—

"Say, old fellow, that howling kind of makes me feel bad, anyhow."

I agreed with him; so we got beyond the sound of the unsophisticated and discarded maidens' cries as soon as possible, and then tried to divert our thoughts by a good long *trek* forward on our journey in the brilliant tropic moonlight.

Red and white quartz and feldspar, with crystallised sandstone, conglomerate, and red granite, prevailed throughout Umziela Land, as far as the Lipaluli River, whilst ironstone was scattered thickly all over the country. Garnets, "mundek," black sand and magnetic iron ore, turned up in every "pan" we tried at the streams in our path, but not a speck of gold.

As we approached the river, game appeared in great quantities; but it was after we had crossed the Lipaluli, and, on the fourteenth day after leaving Umzielar's *kraal*, arrived at the banks of the vaguely known, large, and mysterious Limpopo, that the wild animals thronged the country in incredible numbers. This river was far too deep and wide to be forded, so we were obliged to turn off to the north-west, and proceed along its southern bank. We found canoes were used upon it, and so took advantage of their presence to avoid the tangled bush and mangroves at the edge of the water, by going off in them to shoot—as they stood for a moment petrified with amazement at our appearance, staring at us from the jungle-encumbered banks—such game as was required for our table and the extremely capacious maw of our Umziela allies.

Buffalo, hippopotami, quagga, *gnu*, *gemsbok*, *hartebeest*, and many other beasts of the chase thronged the banks of the Limpopo in vast quantities; whilst the elephant, the fierce and formidable rhinoceros, the lion, leopard, and hyena occasionally put in an appearance; and alligators swarmed in the water almost as plentifully as the feathered legions of cormorants, wild fowl, with many strange, and to us unknown fowls of the air, thronged every neighbouring tree, and maintained an incessant noise with their vociferous chattering, and the rustling, whirring sound of their wings.

One day we came to the termination of a long gully, which extended to

the north, and had every appearance of being a dry and ancient watercourse. Numerous quartz reefs cropped up in its rocky sides, and, altogether, it offered considerable temptation for prospecting; so, as it was impossible to cross with our waggons, we outspanned upon a little plain, fitted three of our oxen with packs, and crossed to the other side of the river in canoes, swimming the three oxen and the horses of the "long Yankee," Wilhelm,



A MEETING WITH RHINOCEROTIS.

Louis, and myself—who formed the party, together with a dozen Umzielas—after us, and making a great noise by beating the surface of the water with pieces of flat wood and paddles, in order to keep off alligators.

We had followed the course of the gully but a short distance, when suddenly we came right upon a huge male and female rhinoceros. As we halted irresolute, Kaffirs and all, they set up a fierce snorting sort of sound, which started off our pack-oxen in dire alarm and fright, and the next moment charged right straight upon the half-dozen natives who stood waiting with myself for the coming up of the rest of our party, immediately after I

had opened fire with my Snider. Although I managed to take a couple of good shots at them, the bullets must have glanced from their tough impenetrable hides, and still, fast and furious, on they came, uttering a shrill, bellowing sort of noise, between a snort and a roar, and with their formidable horns bent low to the ground for attack. Not a moment was to be lost. The Kaffirs had already sought safety in flight, and so off I dashed, in the direction my friends were coming. As I met them galloping up, attracted by the reports of my rifle, the huge brutes not far behind, in full chase, explained the situation. We halted a second, poured in a volley, as ineffective as my previous fire, which allowed the horny monsters to arrive within dangerous and uncomfortable proximity, and then dashed off again at full speed, the nearest brute within a few feet of the hindermost of our party; but although one unfortunate Umziela was overtaken and knocked down by them, they never swerved from pursuing those of us who were mounted. Suddenly, as ill-luck would have it, before we had gone fifty yards, and whilst spurring our horses up a rather steep ridge of rock, our friend, Louis, was thrown from his saddle. His animal had made a bad stumble, shooting him over its head, and landing him right in the path of our terrible pursuers.

"Jump off, boys! Stand by for a shot at their nose or chest as they come up within half a dozen yards," cried the "long Yankee," with resolute promptitude, reining up, springing off his horse, and dragging the helpless Louis to the top of the ridge.

But we had already executed the action he had recommended. Our horses were turned loose, and, rifle in hand, I and Wilhelm knelt down behind the crest of the ridge, our nerves braced to a rigid firmness, for we knew that now our lives depended upon a steady hand, and that nothing but an effective shot could save us from destruction by the coming terrible animals.

Louis was apparently insensible; but, taking his rifle in addition to his own, the "long Yankee" was quickly by our side, whilst the rhinocerotis were still some little distance off.

"Boys," said he, hurriedly, "I'll take the one to the left; you both fire upon the other. Unless you can make sure of his eye, one of you pick out the side of his chest, under the shoulder, and the other let fly at his nose."

We acted upon this advice, Wilhelm choosing the body of our particular foe, and I its wrinkled-up, savage-looking, and dilated nostrils.

As the charging monsters came rapidly upon us, at a great rate, clumsy, shambling, and ungainly as their awkward style of gallop appeared, the rest of the Umzielas came up, whilst those in front descended from the trees, and all, very gallantly, tried to effect a diversion in our favour, by shooting arrows and throwing *assegais* at our formidable assailants, whilst those who carried muskets blazed away. Vainly, however, strove those bare and poorly-armed warriors to divert the charging monsters from their object; although our dusky escort bravely risked their lives by running into dangerous vicinity from which to hurl their ineffective weapons, and fulfil the charge their chief had given them for our safety, the horny armour-plated and almost invulnerable brutes never swerved for an instant from their headlong rush upon ourselves.

"Now then, boys," I shouted, as the brutes arrived within five or six yards, and their pace slackened as they began ascending the ridge, "blaze away—steady. Let them have it!"

The reports of our rifles rang out sharp and loud, almost simultaneously, just as the fierce and redly-gleaming, small, pig-like eyes were glaring ferociously upon us, and the hot breath of the panting monsters was almost in our faces.

It was a trying moment. The brave Kaffirs gave us up as lost, shouted a despairing yell, and rushed forward with their knives and stabbing *assegais* in hand.

The three puffs of smoke obscured our view of the two terrible brutes for a moment, but even as Will snatched up the other rifle, while I and Wilhelm plucked forth our deadly Deane and Adams' breech-loading revolvers, the vapour passed away, and lo! by the blessing of Providence, we saw our frightful enemies rolling on the ground.

Our aim had been true, despite the agitating nature of the situation. Indeed, in such cases, where the peril is deadly, imminent, and unavoidable, I have always found that it makes one cool, firm, and steady as a rock—there is not time for fear—whereas, in gradual approach of danger, the mind has leisure for reflection and anxiety.

At all events, the "long Yankee" had dropped his opponent dead in its tracks, his bullet having exactly pierced its eye and brain, whilst I had committed no little havoc upon the other monster's smelling apparatus, and the large spherical ball from Wilhelm's heavy *roer* had fairly smashed its right shoulder.

"Habet! Hic habet! He has it! Hurroo, my boys, hurroo!" roared the "long Yankee," dancing and jumping over the ridge in high glee, and finishing the wounded rhinoceros by discharging Louis' rifle with the muzzle almost in its ear.

Our rejoicing was great, and it was hard to believe our senses that those two terrible, formidable, and almost invincible monsters had been so easily disposed of, and were now actually lying there before us in all their huge, unwieldy, and fearful bulk, so still, harmless, and lifeless.

"Wal," said the "long Yankee," "I've knocked over a heap of game in my time—all sorts of things, from that 'amoosin little cuss' (as Barnum calls the kangaroo), to a 'grizzly' on the Rocky Mountains—but, boys, tell yer what, that's the worst and heaviest kind of an-i-mal that ever this child drew a bee-line on, it air. It took me all I knew how to lead his eye up, it did. A 'grizzly's' pretty rough, when it comes to close quarters, but I'd elect to have a rough and tumble with any two of them before I'd hev a difficulty again with one of these cast-iron-hided, shot-proof, horn-nosed an-i-mals, I would."

When excited, our long friend became more Transatlantic in his speech than usual, as, by this time, my readers may surmise.

The pleasant surprise with which Monsieur Louis sat up and surveyed the scene of battle, and the two ungainly carcases of our late terrible antagonists, may easily be imagined. Fortunately, beyond some bruises, and being stunned for a few moments, he had not received any injury. He came to his senses, as he strangely expressed it, expecting—

"To droo me find der hole knocked mit der rhinoceros horn so pig ast mein leg."

His joy was great; but our rejoicings were as nothing compared with those of the Umzielas and our driver, whom we had brought with us. They set up a hunting-dance, a frenetic sort of gymnastic and vocal triumph,

formed in a circle round the fallen monsters; and, as nearly as I can guess, for three mortal hours did they keep it up, without a moment's cessation or respite.

When this extraordinary and utterly reckless abandonment to their feelings had gone on for some time, we called to them, shouted, pulled at them, did all in our power to make them desist, but unavailingly. Mad with excitement, they raved, roared, and yelled their "kulu zingela iguma," or grand hunting songs in chorus, now of a shrill and acutely-penetrating tone, anon of a deep and rumbling diapason; whilst dancing, springing, stamping, and whirling about, like so many frantic black fiends, and with every movement, step, and gesture in the most emphatic and perfect time, in their "kulu umguba," or great hunting dance.

What made the scene still wilder and more weird was the fact that, attracted by our firing and the noise of our allies, numerous warriors arrived from neighbouring *kraals*, the whole of whom, so soon as they saw the dead beasts, joined in the triumphantly-furious and desperately-determined performance of the Umzielas, forming an outer circle round about them.

It was only when fairly exhausted with fatigue that the excited natives stopped the song and dance. Then, after a short repose, they at once began to cut up the dead monsters and to light fires. They did not bag rhinocerotis every day, and the event made them out of their minds with delight.

We were much annoyed to find that it was utterly in vain to try and move on so long as a morsel of rhinoceros meat remained. Our Kaffirs and their companions from every *kraal* within a considerable circuit stuck to the carcases till nothing but the bones and thick plates of horny hide were left. In two days all the flesh was eaten. Seldom, indeed, do the Kaffirs ever capture that formidable animal, and then only in pitfalls, so they value his flesh according to its rarity, besides having an absurd superstition that eating it will make them brave, fierce, and strong.

The natives north of the Limpopo were not such fine people as the Umzielas and the Zulus, and were known as the Kwari-kwari tribe, the Knopneuzen of the Boers. They are now mixing with the people of Umzielar, whom they also acknowledge as their head chief; and I fancy that the peculiar

custom of pinching the skin of the face into a series of small knobs, about the size of buckshot, in a line down the centre of the forehead and nose—which obtained them their name of knob-nosed—must be getting out of fashion, as few of the young men or women were so disfigured.

Having prospected the gully for about seven or eight miles, without finding the slightest trace of gold, and to the no slight curiosity of the natives, who came in crowds to see us digging great holes in the earth, we re-crossed the river, and returned to the waggons. These, we found, had been moved on to a



VIEW NEAR THE LIMPOPO.

larger plain, at the other side of some extraordinary hills, a little further up the river, and not far from the last outspanning place where we had left them. The new ground was higher, and neither so damp nor mosquito-infested as the last.

It was early morning, about half an hour after sunrise, as we entered upon the new plain. Hippopotami were waddling and grazing upon it, fresh from the river, to take breakfast; and the strange-shaped hills stood up against the bright eastern light as though the surrounding country had slipped down from them by some convulsion of nature, leaving them standing up with straight, perpendicular, and inaccessible sides, as block-like, lofty, and abrupt sections of basaltic rock.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Buffalo Fight—A Vegetable Discovery—Nocturnal Adventure with a Lion—Hydropathy Extraordinary—We Bag an Elephant—New Scenery—Arrive at Basuetlar Land—We are Strange Flesh to the Natives—Their Friendliness—They Wonder at our White Skins, our Hair, and Beards—Targarti again—Geological Formation of the Country—The Mighty Baobab at last—Vast Herds of Game.

IMMEDIATELY upon the return of our detachment to the encampment, the tent was struck, the oxen collected, and a start effected without loss of time. Leaving the small plain we had last outspanned at, our course laid through a great forest, extending for many miles along the southern bank of the Limpopo, and through which we experienced the greatest difficulty at times in moving with the waggons, whilst the danger from wild animals—elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, lions, leopards, and boa constrictors—was great. The forest was mainly composed of baobabs, umzimbete or iron-wood, palmetto, martingulu—a large wild fruit-tree, bearing delicious plums—and a fine species of African oak. Many grassy glades wound in and out amongst the trees, and of these we were obliged to take advantage for our waggons. The scenery was wild, sylvan, and magnificently luxuriant; giant trunks, rich green foliage in prolific abundance, a close, thick, grassy verdure, and the manifold rays of many gorgeously-tinted flowers, with the powerful aroma exhaled from flowering trees, were everywhere around us.

Right in our road, the afternoon following the reunion of our party, we suddenly came upon a group of wild buffalo, two of which—huge, hairy, full-grown bulls—were engaged in fierce combat. It was just one of those sights that can only be seen in the wilderness, far from the haunts of civilised man, and where the wild and savage creatures roam in comparatively undisturbed freedom.

Trampling the emerald turf into dust beneath the fierce and rapid strokes of their hard hoofs, bellowing with a thunderous, leonine sort of a roar, the two powerful bulls rushed upon each other with desperate fury, heedless even of our approach, though the cow and calf quickly vanished in the woods. Their red



COMBAT BETWEEN TWO BUFFALO BULLS.

eyes flaming, their wide and quivering nostrils dilating, charge after charge the two enraged animals made upon each other; falling to their knees at each terrible shock, the noise of which resounded far through the woods; and then, scrambling to their legs, retreating a short distance, only sufficient for another rush.

We put an end to the combat by shooting one of the combatants. We could easily have killed them both, but did not care to obtain more food than sufficient to last our Umziela allies a day or two, because, as it would not keep longer in the hot weather, even if rubbed with salt, they would have been sure to delay our journey, by refusing to leave the spot until they had devoured the superabundant meat.

Pawing the ground, tossing his mighty head, and bellowing in triumph, the surviving buffalo stood for a moment over his fallen antagonist, glaring upon us with his fiery eyes, and seeming on the point of charging; but then, as the Kaffirs rushed forward to get sufficiently near to use their arrows, *assegais*, and very inferior muskets, he suddenly turned tail, and dashed off after the cow and calf.

Whilst travelling through this forest, we discovered a very welcome addition to our dietary scale in rather a singular manner. The "long Yankee," it seems, had noticed—inspired thereto, no doubt, by my discovery of the Kaffir tea—that, when out to graze, our oxen always picked out a kind of large-leaved, trailing plant, growing rather plentifully amongst the grass, and with leaves extremely like those of the geranium. He gathered some of this stuff, showed it to our cook—who recognised it, and told him that it was good for food—but said not a word to any of us about it. Then, when it came to his turn to act as caterer of the mess, he most agreeably surprised us with a huge and steaming dish of wild spinach. It was a very pleasant as well as healthy addition to our bill of fare, and he received great credit for the discovery. Ever after we were seldom without a supply of the vegetable at table.

For fear of leopards and lions we always kept the horses and oxen kraaled at night between the two waggons, whilst large fires were kept burning, one at either end of the enclosed space; though, necessarily, from the ground

occupied by so many animals, at a distance of a few yards beyond either end of the vehicles.

Ever since entering the forest we had heard the loud roaring of beasts of prey at night, sometimes in the distance, but not infrequently near at hand. Upon the third evening of our woodland journey, we lost one of our best oxen by the attack of a lion. The sun had just set, and we were all lying down in the waggons, having a smoke, and enjoying the *dolce far niente* of the quiet interval before our supper, which was being prepared by our handy though not courageous Thomas, when we were suddenly startled by the shrill cry of our drivers and foreloupers, who came rushing back to the camp, having been out looking after the grazing cattle, yelling—

"Ibubesi! Ibubesi! Ibubesi talta inkarbi!" (A lion! A lion! A lion has taken an ox!)

The hurry, agitation, and excitement with which all hands dropped their pipes, snatched up their weapons, and sprang forth from the waggons, may be easier imagined than described. Everything was in a state of wild confusion and alarm. At length, however, we induced the frightened Kaffirs to lead us in the direction the king of beasts had made his appearance. As we advanced, a terrible voice, between a growl and a roll of thunder, warned us that he was close at hand; but then, the noise of crackling brambles and brushwood told us that he had decided not to accept a meeting, and was, in fact, in full retreat. In a few moments we came up to the carcase of one of our best *trek* oxen, dead and mangled, lying where the lion had dragged it.

We did not remove the dead ox, but left it where it laid, as a bait, to tempt the formidable slayer back again. Then we divided ourselves into two watches, four of us in each, with half the Umzielas, who were armed with guns.

It was my first watch, and shortly before midnight it struck me that some heavy body was approaching; I could not distinctly hear any definite sound, but, nevertheless, had an idea of a slow and stealthy movement—a heavy pressure, rather than a tread—whilst the grass seemed stirring with something more than the wind. I was just on the point of speaking to the Umziela by my side, when he rapidly raised his gun, fired at the rocks above us, and yelled "Ibubesi! Ibubesi!"



A CLOSE SHOT.

Mechanically I raised my own rifle, and, within half a dozen paces, sent a bullet through the heart of a huge lion, on the edge of the rocks behind which we were hiding, just as it was in the act of springing on my sable comrade. We rushed back a few yards, as our companions came running up,

and the huge animal rolled down from the ridge in the agonies of death. Great was the rejoicing of the Kaffirs at our victory.

The trees of this immense forest were far too big for any clearance by the Kaffirs, so that the country was entirely uninhabited, except at a few plains of small extent adjacent to the Limpopo. It was at one such opening that I saw a specimen of Æsculapian art which it will be very long before I can forget.

Upon reaching this narrow strip of timberless ground, Roger and I rode down to the river to see what its banks were like in the way of auriferous indication. We passed a pretty large *kraal* upon an eminence; and found, squatted down upon their hams in a row, at the brink of the Limpopo, nine Kaffirs, two of whom were women, three boys, and the rest men. They were bending forward and drinking, then recovering their position and holding their stomachs; whilst, every now and then, a disagreeable, violent, and purposely-prolonged retching came from the whole lot. This extraordinary proceeding puzzled us at first, but, on closer inspection, we saw that the natives were drinking huge draughts of water, after which they made themselves sick by putting their fingers down their throats; and this very unpleasant sort of performance was indulged in over and over again. As we had approached behind them, they were not aware of our presence until Roger's horse began to neigh, when they looked round, started up in affright, and would, no doubt, had not the river been before and ourselves behind them, have taken to flight, for it was certainly a sudden and startling appearançe of the first white men they had ever seen, as we afterwards ascertained.

Perceiving that they could not run away, between loud, involuntary belchings, they did the next best thing, hailing us with "Sa-ka bona, inkosi? Tina tokesa ku bona wena, kulu umlungo inkosi!" (How do you do—or, hail!—chief? We rejoice to see you, great white chieftains!)

Upon returning their half-fearful, hesitating salutations, and inquiring as to the meaning of their rather strange sort of diversion, we were informed that it was the cold-water cure for several kinds of sickness, biliousness, too much *jwarlar*, disorders of the bowels, &c. This was hydropathy with a vengeance!

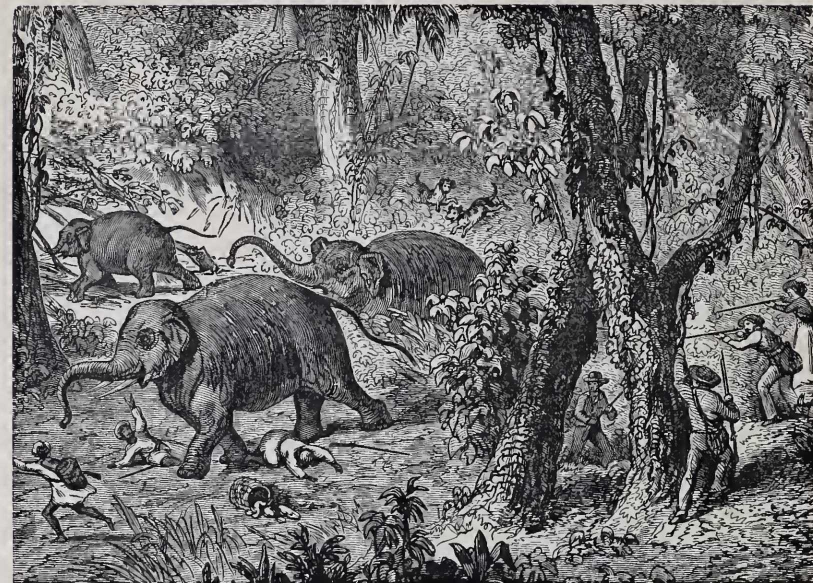
As we found but little prospect of discovering gold in Umzielar's country we sent home the men he had supplied us with, retaining only the six *indunas* or *amanxusa.*

It was whilst passing through this forest that we first met with elephants. Having exhausted our supply of buffalo meat, we outspanned early one morning, and went hunting. Leaving Mynheer, our drivers, foreloupers, and the timid Thomas in charge of the waggons, we divided the rest of our forces into two parties; the fair Carlotta accompanying Roger, her brother, and myself; whilst our American friends, Louis, and three of the Umzielas formed the other.

We had been out in the woods nearly an hour without meeting any game, when, suddenly, we heard several reports in the direction our friends had taken. This placed us on the *qui vive*, and we proceeded to establish ourselves behind the trunks of some large trees, commanding a glade through which any animals in flight would be likely to pass; at the same time sending the three natives who had accompanied us—and who were, in their ideas, gorgeously arrayed in old shirts and head-dresses of sundry bits of cloth with which we had rejoiced their hearts—off into the bush with our mongrel dogs, to act as beaters. These men were armed with muskets; and scarcely had they disappeared, when we heard the report of their weapons, followed by a tremendous crashing of the trees and brushwood, a loud, screaming, trumpeting sort of noise, and, the next instant, into the glade they dashed, closely followed by three huge elephants. Just as they arrived opposite our position they were overtaken by the foremost of these monstrous animals. Two of them were knocked down, right and left, by its huge legs, but, fortunately, before it could either gore or trample them, we tumbled it over with a volley; its companions making good their escape.

We found that our victim had already been badly wounded in five or six places, by the natives as well as by our friends, but we had given it the *coup de grâce*, Wilhelm's heavy ball having entered behind its shoulder, whilst I and Miss van Meyer had struck it at a weak spot near the eye; Roger having fired at the broadside anywhere.

Now that we had our game, we scarcely knew what to do with it. The



SURPRISED BY ELEPHANTS.

Kaffirs, however, soon set to work cutting off its feet, when the other party came up in pursuit. As for ourselves, we made an attempt to obtain the ivory, but, after chopping the poor animal's head into a hideous mess, were obliged to give it up, and the great tusks remained in the carcase as firm as ever. The Umzielas could not inform us how to cut them out, but said that, in time, the animal's decay would loosen them. We left them as a perquisite for those perspicuous gentlemen, who could fetch them when ready, after parting with us; though I have a shrewd suspicion that that was the very object which they had in view, and so astutely kept back their dissecting knowledge.

I cannot say much in favour of elephant's foot, though it is the *bonne bouche* of all Kaffirs. The Umzielas cooked it in an oven they made

in the ground, and then piled up fire on top. In flavour it was more like very soft leather and glue mixed together than anything else that I can compare it to.

As the natives told us that the Limpopo made a great bend to the north, and that nowhere along that part could it be crossed by waggons, we travelled due west, so as to strike it again at a point some eighty or a hundred miles distant, where it turned to the south-west.

After travelling through the extensive forest for eleven days, at a rate of very little over ten miles during the twenty-four hours, we emerged upon open ground once more, soon after crossing the Lechlarbane, a small river which flows into the Limpopo, and acts as a boundary between the Umzielar and Basuetlar tribes.

Many of the hills which hereabouts covered the whole country with ceaseless, wavelike, rolling undulations, and, in some places, with rugged, barren, jagged, and fantastic rocks, were formed of a hard grey basalt, and rose up, terrace after terrace—ribbed, corrugated, and extraordinary—to end in that peculiar African feature, the flat top.

Half a day's *trek* through this hill-country brought us to the first Basuetlar *kraals*, where a large number of huts, of a much larger size than any we had yet seen, occupied a commanding position upon the crest of several high hills.

Umzielar's messengers introduced us, and we were well received by an old chief, so old, indeed, that he could hardly see, move, hear, or be said to live; though he was greatly respected, we heard, for wisdom, and was a favoured ally of the powerful Umzielas.

The Basuetlars saluted us in a way that was quite strange and new to us; the men slapping their hips, whilst the women smacked their hands together, and uttered an exclamation like, "Lullilulu, lullilulu!" These people were not so tawny or ruddy in colour as the Kaffirs, their skin being of a blacker tinge, and their hair longer, though their features were equally as good. They had never seen any white men before, and were perfectly amazed at our appearance. Men, women, and children—old, young, middle-aged, and those just able to toddle—all crowded around us, wild and devoured with curiosity.

It was as much as ever the chiefs and our *indunas* could do to prevent the crush being really oppressive.

.The confinement to our waggons, and the fatigue of the journey through the forest, made us welcome with pleasure the offer of the old chief—whose name I forget, only remembering that it was almost unpronounceable with so many "clicks"—to supply us with a hut. This we gladly accepted, and determined to remain for a few days, to rest ourselves as well as the oxen.

These people treated us very kindly, but we were often in dread that they might prove too kind, for the girls seemed to have much greater liberty than their sable sisters of any other tribe that we had met, whilst the recollection of our scrape with poor Lungarzi and Gugu had not yet faded from our minds. At first they actually thought that our clothes were part of our bodies. When that notion became exploded, one of the things that puzzled them most was our beards and moustaches. These hirsute appendages of ours received many a steady drag from the old men and the warriors—all in a friendly way, which was the worst of it, because we could only grin and bear it—and many a sly tweak from the roguish young damsels. The reason for this infliction was the anxiety of the natives to ascertain whether the hair was actually growing to our faces—whether it were false or real—beards never having been seen by any of them before, except as represented by the short half-inch of wool upon the chin and upper lips of their own countrymen.

The girls became very friendly with the fair Carlotta, who they treated as altogether a superior order of being to themselves. The delight they manifested when she once let down the luxuriant length of her magnificent golden tresses was something indescribable. They "Wowd" and "Ma-med" for over an hour, danced about and stamped in their excitement, and acted, altogether, in an absurd, not to say frantic manner.

To us, however, they became rather annoying, as, excited thereto, no doubt, by their curiosity, they pertinaciously endeavoured to persuade us to accompany them to bathe in the river, ignorant, of course, of any indecorum in the proceeding, and imagining that it would be the plan by which to have a thorough inspection of our strange white skins. In point of fact, at one time, taking advantage of our passive resistance, the sturdy damsels were very

nearly carrying us off, *nolens volens*, upon their backs, and only desisted from the attempt at our expression of severe displeasure. Although then they could see that we did not like, and decidedly objected to, the naïve idea, I am quite satisfied that the reason why was about the most remote thing from their understanding. They had a firm belief that we must be very soft, tender, and delicate, from the whiteness of our skins, and at first touched us like a little girl handling the only baby she had ever seen ; soon, however, they began to appreciate the fact that we were not so very brittle after all, when their investigations became decidedly rougher and less pleasant.

Two things that seemed to astonish these simple savages more than all were our watches and our compasses. The former, they were convinced, lived ; and when they ascertained that we never fed the strange things with either food or water, they at once declared it "kulu targarti"—the equivalent to *fetish* of other tribes on the west coast and in the interior.

"Truly," said they, "the white men are wonderful, and great targarti. They keep animals in little hard cases in their pockets, which talk to them all day long, and live without eating or drinking. They have others"—(our compasses)—"in small boxes, which cannot speak or make a noise, but which always keep an arm pointing one way, to show them the road. Great are the umlungos!"

The Basuetlars were very well provided with the necessities of life. Their land was fertile, and produced immense crops of maize, sorghum—like Chinese sugar-grass—sweet-potatoes, pumpkins, and a singular vegetable, not unlike a turnip ; whilst they were well supplied with fowls, goats, and cattle. Tobacco, also, as in Amaswarzi Land and Umzielar's country, flourished most luxuriantly. I have seen it growing with rich, thick leaves, more than two feet long ; in fact, it seemed to thrive and spring up like a weed, indigenous to the soil. They used it more for snuff than to smoke, seeming to prefer the hemp-leaves—which also grow wild all over Kaffir-land—in a pipe. This latter article is smoked like the Hindoo *hubble-bubble*, through water, in a bullock's horn, and it is a favourite pastime of the Kaffirs to squirt the saliva through a straw, making wet patches on the floors of their huts, which they then spread about with the point of a finger, to represent *kraals* or military movements.

This is the only indoor game they have, and can be played by two, or any number. It cannot be termed a game of skill or calculation, that is certain enough; neither does the considerable time they waste at the inane though dirty habit say much for the innate intellect which some would have us believe is equal to that of the white races.

Amongst the vegetation of the country we noticed seringa, ebony, mimosa, and palm trees, as well as indigo, cassia, and hemp plants. Castor-oil trees grew about every *kraal*, and are used medicinally.

After four days' halt at the frontier village of the Basuetlars, we went on our way once more, bidding adieu to our Umziela messengers, and making their hearts glad with a few large blue beads apiece.

The geological formation still presented much quartz and feldspar, but mixed with greyish sandstone, and igneous rocks that we considered of syenitic order. Ironstone abounded everywhere, and we came upon several seams of shaly coal, cropping right up to the surface; but of gold not a trace could we obtain, and Ophir seemed as far off as ever, though, now and then, so strange, ragged, and monumental, as to resemble gigantic ruins, were the rocks we saw, that in the distance we often took them for the handiwork of man. Although we now began to question all the tribes we passed through very closely as to their acquaintance with any rumours of extensive ruins of stone-built cities in the interior, somewhere north of the Limpopo, and east of the Matebele country, not the faintest symptom of confirmation of that baseless myth circulated in Natal could we obtain. Without exception, all the natives to whom we spoke upon the subject declared that they had never heard of such a thing. The oldest inhabitants were produced—men, also, who had travelled in various directions through the Mooshoona and other tribes, as far as the Zambesi—but perfect unanimity of opinion prevailed; so I fear that those who hanker after Ophir, and, like ourselves, may be foolish enough to go and look for it, will have to search in some other part of this sublunary sphere.

Shortly after entering Basuetlar Land we encountered the first specimen we saw of the gigantic species of baobab. We were crossing a small plain very heavily encumbered with weeds, brambles, and thick grass, and right before us, in solitary grandeur, beheld the giant tree. Upon reaching it we



PORTION OF THE BAOBAB.

found that it measured no less than fifteen arm-length spans of the "long Yankee" around its mighty trunk, breast high from the ground, which would represent as vast a circumference as at least ninety feet! But even this was not the greatest size of the tree, for, forty feet from the earth, the huge trunk bulged out very considerably, just before the commencement of the gnarled, rugged, and contorted branches. The height of the solid trunk was very little short of sixty feet; the extreme height, to the topmost twigs, not less than a hundred and thirty! This mighty baobab stood bare and rugged, in all its nakedness of vast wood, for it bore no foliage, though the branches were covered with buds; perhaps it does not bear leaf till later in the summer. As we stood surveying the vegetable monster, in mingled feelings of both stupefied wonder and awed admiration at the great Creator's stupendous handiwork, the mind could not but wander and flounder helplessly in vague conjectures as to the immense age of that solitary monarch of the trees; the dim, vast, and distant cycles of centuries through which it had stood; and the unknown, unrecorded, pre-historic generations of mankind which had lived, flourished, succeeded each other, and passed away beneath the time-defying shadow of its hoary head. Thousands of years, myriads of ages, must that giant tree have existed. If the great Deluge were really universal, the subsidence of the waters must have seen the tree's germination. But, for my part, taking into consideration the facts that science has revealed in connection with the concentric layers proving the age of exogenous stems, I should far prefer the theory of those who maintain either that the Deluge was not universal, or that our chronology computed therefrom is too absurdly small and incorrect.

Vast herds of game roamed over the country through which we were now passing, and, whenever we came to the plains, the sight that met our gaze was something wonderful and almost incredible. Thousands upon thousands of animals were to be seen gathered together in enormous droves of separate species; the *wildebeest*, *hartebeest*, *springbok*, *blesbok*, *koodoo*, *eland*, *gnu*, zebra, ostrich, and many other living things, stretched far as the eye could reach. Whenever we required meat, there was nothing to do but mount, gallop straight at the nearest herd, and tumble one over with a rifle-shot, before the astonished animals started off in alarm. Although we saw a good many ostriches during



GAME IN BASUETLAR LAND.

our passage through Basuetlar Land, yet not one of us succeeded in obtaining a single specimen. Roger had the first chance, but failed to take advantage of it. Being better mounted than the rest, he came to pretty close quarters with one of the gigantic birds before it dashed off at a rate defying all pursuit, and soon became hidden in the dense cloud of dust thrown up by the mixed herd of numerous beasts tearing away for their lives, his shot only cutting a small feather from its wing.

CHAPTER XVII.

An Alligator Hunt by the Basuetlars—Harpooning Hippopotami—A Prolonged Fight with an Old Bull : His ultimate Capture—We Make for the Tatin—Curious Hills—Mynheer sticks in the River—The "Vaalpens"—We arrive at the so-called Tatin Gold-fields—Find Forty Diggers, but extremely little Gold—A Prospecting Party up the River—A Snake Duel Extraordinary—Buffalo at the Tatin.

THE Basuetlars were a brave, stalwart, and hardy race, and by far the most daring hunters of any natives we had previously met with. What especially attracted our attention was the manner in which they chased the alligator and the hippopotamus.

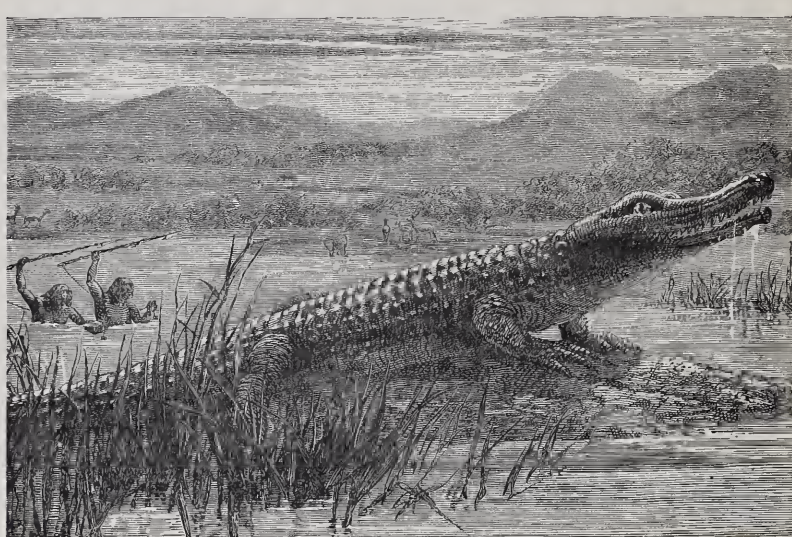
Several days after leaving the frontier *kraals*, we once more struck the Limpopo at its bend to the south-west. As we found it still far too deep to cross with our waggons, we were obliged to continue along its southern bank, contenting ourselves with the knowledge that, should we not find a fordable part before, we would be able to cross at the drift of the high road to the Tatin, which intersected it at right angles, much further up its course to the westward.

Soon after sighting the river again, we began to witness the exploits of the natives against its formidable amphibious denizens.

The old chief at the frontier *kraals* had given us a couple of *indunas*, as escort and passport through Basuetlar Land ; and when we expressed to them our desire to witness a regular alligator or hippopotamus hunt, they very soon collected a sufficient number of hunters from the villages near the river. The only arms these men carried were harpoons and ordinary *assegais*. The former were very keen blades, about six inches long, but with only one flange or barb; an eye was spliced on to the shaft of this iron, to which a very strong hide rope was attached. This line was some fifteen or twenty feet long, and at the other end was attached to an empty gourd-shell, which served as a buoy ; the plan being to harpoon the animals, when, if the iron struck a tender part, penetrated sufficiently deep, and held fast, the buoy, by floating on the top of

the water, indicated the monster's position, and so enabled the hunters to follow it up, dislodge it from its hiding-places at the bottom of the river, and gradually worry, stab, and hack it to pieces. Besides their weapons, the hunters were well supplied with several coils of rope.

Alligators were numerous enough in the river, so there was not any difficulty in finding one. It was mid-day, and just the time to find the



BASUETLAR HUNTERS HARPOONING AN ALLIGATOR.

hideous saurians taking mundane affairs easy in the sun. We soon espied a huge fellow, at least twenty-five feet long, from end of tail to tip of nose, enjoying a siesta on the top of a sand-bank nearly in mid-channel.

Ascertaining the way of the wind, our hunters—ten in number, two of whom were the leading men, or harpooners—begged us to remain perfectly quiet where we then stood, about two hundred yards from the river, whilst the two daring men entered the water to leeward of the sprawling brute, whose ack happened to be turned their way. Slowly and cautiously, step by step

crouched down in the water, with only their heads and harpoons above the surface, they gradually advanced upon the unconscious slumberer. They must have reached within half a dozen yards of his saurianship before their presence became known to him ; but then, seeming to be suddenly alarmed, he started up, opened his huge jaws, looked up, and began to shuffle round in a circle, as though to take an observation in every direction. But at this moment—with lines coiled round the staff, the buoy held in the left hand, and the harpoon firmly grasped in the right—the two hunters took advantage of a movement by which the monster had exposed his weak spots behind his legs—his armpits, legpits, or whatever we may call them—and launched their keen weapons at his vulnerable points with all their force.

One of the weapons, aimed with beautiful precision, went in behind his shoulder ; the line uncoiled, the stick drew, and the buoy floated, as, after clashing his huge jaws in fury, and with a noise that could have been heard half a mile or further, he plunged into the water in pursuit of his daring assailants. The other harpoon, just missing the vulnerable underneath portion of the huge reptile, glanced off the flinty scales of his back, and flew up harmlessly several yards in the air. The other iron held firm ; the stick floated away down stream, but the little buoy marked the silent and deadly hidden course of the wounded monster under water in chase of the fleeing hunters. Before—by swimming, and by walking along the bottom when possible—they reached the bank, the buoy had got dangerously close to them, and every one of the spectators yelled aloud for them to redouble their exertions.

They were but just in time. Even as their feet left the water it was broken into a ripple of foam behind them, and the hideous bony head, with huge distended jaws, rushed up above the surface.

At the same instant one of the hunters standing on the bank made an adroit cast with a rope he held ready, and succeeded in throwing the running noose at its end exactly over the little buoy. Hauling upon this, the knot became jammed, and the harpoon line was held firm. Then, rushing off to some neighbouring trees with the other end of his rope, this man proceeded to take in the slack, and keep a round turn about a stout trunk, as the crocodile

waddled fast and furiously after its first two assailants, who purposely led him in that direction.

The combat now began in earnest. The harpoon rope, being kept tight, prevented the monster from turning round with any degree of rapidity, whilst the rest of the hunters, nimbly springing towards and then away from him on both sides, thrust and stabbed at his belly, eyes, and the hollows under his legs, with their sharp *assegais*.

Considering the awkward look of the reptile, and the fact that he was held on to from ahead by the iron in his shoulder, he displayed extraordinary activity ; shuffling from side to side, making terrible blows with his long and powerful tail, and snapping at his tormentors with a frightful pair of jaws, big enough to bite any two of them in half together.

Having been foolish enough to leave the water, to which he could not return unless the iron drew or the rope broke, the fight was not nearly so dangerous to his assailants as it would otherwise have been, and they did not fail to taunt him, by yelling at and calling him—

"Isiula ! Kulu isiula ! Tina chacha bularlar wena !" (Fool ! Big fool ! We'll soon kill you now !

It was a wild and exciting scene, those dark, sinewy, and nearly nude warriors yelling and springing about ; now advancing with cautious movement, anon bounding back with great and wonderful leaps high into the air, sometimes, even, right over the infuriated saurian's scaly back, brandishing their lances, and stabbing away at every opportunity ; whilst their enemy maintained the combat in deadly silence, save for the terrible clashing of his formidable jaws.

Streaming with blood from many wounds, and drenching the sand wherever he moved, the monster was fast becoming exhausted. Before, however, his savage life departed, he very nearly had revenge. More daring than his fellows, the hunter who had thrown the effective harpoon jumped right upon the scaly and corrugated back. In a moment, by a powerful fling of the monster's tail, he was thrown several feet into the air, and would, in his descent, infallibly have been caught by the long rows of serrated teeth, but for the admirable promptitude with which half a dozen of the hunters sprang at

the harpoon rope, and swerved the monster from his object. The leading hunter, not to be outdone, even as he fell upon his feet within a yard or so of that fearful mouth wide open to receive him, made a skilful lunge with his *assegai*, and plunged the keen blade deep into one of the glassy, filmed, yet fiercely-gleaming eyes. After this the fight was soon over, and the huge alligator was savagely done to death. The natives highly esteem its flesh, whilst they value the tough skin still more for shields; and the doctors hold its brains, eyes, and sundry other parts, in great request as *mooti*.

It was quite dark by the time that huge saurian had been fairly disposed of, dissected, and prepared for culinary, defensive, and medicinal purposes, so hunting was over for the day; but it was arranged that on the morrow we should witness the chase of hippopotami—a monster, however, not nearly so much dreaded by those skilful and fearless Nimrods.

Excepting its unpleasant associations, alligator flesh is far from being unpalatable. It is white, tender—too much so, indeed—and has a flavour between fish, turtle, and iguana; unless, however, one happens to be very hungry, I should imagine, there is, after all, the nauseating reflection that it is but reptile.

Early in the morning, whilst the waggons started on some short distance inland, under the charge of Mynheer, who had seen plenty of every sort of hunting in Africa, the rest of our party accompanied the Basuetlars along the river's bank, on the look-out for hippopotami.

Before long, out in the middle of the stream, playing and disporting themselves in the water, at a place where some rocks projected above the surface, we saw a whole family of the monstrous creatures—a full-grown male, with four or five wives, and a young one.

Bidding us remain concealed in the bush, the two harpooners crept away to leeward, and then cautiously entered the water, creeping and swimming along as on the previous day when after the crocodile.

Probably unsuspicious of the two small objects slowly advancing towards them, even if they were seen, the creatures continued to play, splash, roll, and tumble about, without manifesting the slightest symptoms of uneasiness. At length, however, when the hunters had arrived within fifty yards of them, the

bull began to get fidgety, and to snuff and snort as though he scented danger in the air. After raising his huge head several times well out of the water to take a look around, and not seeming satisfied, he slowly and laboriously dragged his immense bulk on to the top of one of the rocks, from whence to take a better observation.



BASUETLARS HARPOONING HIPPOPOTAMI.

In the meanwhile the hunters had used the utmost despatch in lessening the distance that separated them from their prey. A few strokes more, another step or two as they struck bottom, and they were within range; whilst the old bull, eyeing them suspiciously, opening and shutting his huge mouth, and uttering a bellowing, snorting, rumbling sort of noise, seemed to be wondering what they were and what they wanted. Short, however, were his speculations. The harpoons were poised aloft, and then, as the daring hunters found firm footing, and stood up breast-high out of the water, were hurled with strong and accurate aim at his huge body. Sinking down and diving out of sight, these

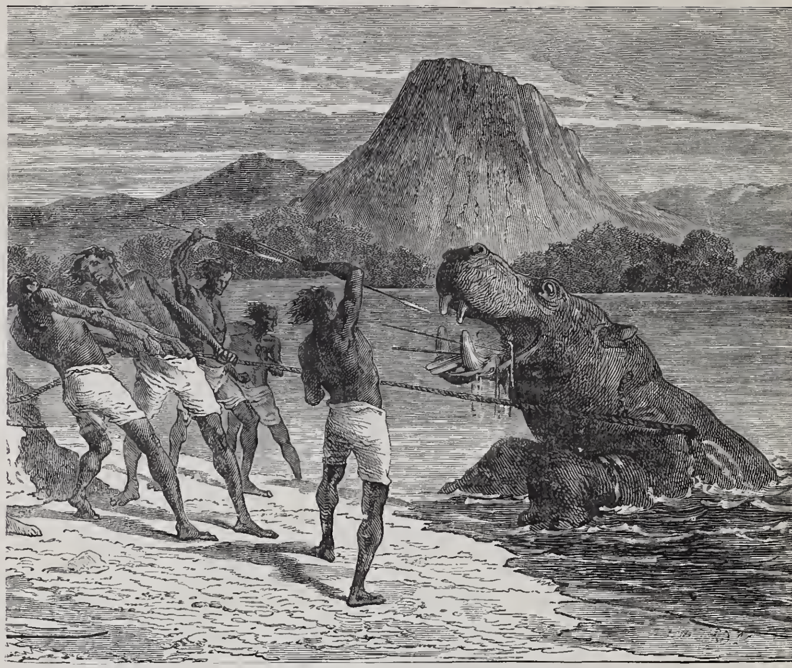
sable Nimrods then struck out under water for the shore; whilst the hippopotamus—poor brute!—bellowed and snorted with pain and rage, plunged into the stream with a force and weight which sent huge columns of spray sparkling high into the air, and occasionally reared his tremendous head above the surface, in his vain efforts to discover the cruel enemy that had sent the rankling irons into his flesh.

As soon as the two hunters reached the shore, they called their comrades to their aid, took the end of a long rope, and entered the water again, some little distance above where the buoys could be seen floating, and swam across to the opposite bank of the river, which they entered again about fifty yards below the buoys, and swam back to our side. The bight of the rope now surrounded the two floats, and the whole party proceeded to haul away upon it until it became tight, and the bend or angle caught the harpoon lines, and, jammed tight around them, was brought close together just under the buoys.

It was now "haul together," and the prey was gradually dragged towards the bank, coming willingly, probably to ease the pain which the pulling on the barbed irons in his flesh must have occasioned, as well as to discover his tormentors.

But little trouble was experienced in bringing the heavy game to land; but to get him out of the water was quite another question. At first I thought, with my friends, that it would be a repetition of the alligator fight, for the huge river-horse no sooner reached the bank, and showed his head above water, than he rushed forward to attack his enemies. They, however, were quite equal to the emergency, and met the monster with a shower of *assegais*, many of which went down his throat, as he opened his mighty jaws, gnashing his terrible tusks in fury, and uttering a hoarse, rumbling, and asthmatical-sounding sort of sustained roaring. Even this did not stop his onslaught. The immense bulk rose out of the water to the hind legs, but then, running close to the huge mouth and gleaming tusks, the two principal hunters dashed several handfuls of sand right in the unfortunate brute's eyes.

Blinded for the time, smarting, and assailed at his most sensitive point, the hippopotamus plunged back into the stream to lave his eyes, and the natives could not withstand his strength, even if the now doubled and firmly



CAPTURE OF THE HIPPOPOTAMUS.

twisted together harpoon lines would have borne the strain, so they slacked away as he pulled, waiting until he was quiet to haul away again, and drag him to the bank. To this the out-manœuvred brute was foolishly nothing loath, and, having cleansed the sand from his eyes, rushed back to the fight, his black and savage heart eager for the destruction of his tormentors. Again, however, was he put to flight as before. Streaming with blood, spouting it in torrents from his mouth and through his nostrils, although he crunched the lance shafts like so many straws, yet the blades remained deep in his throat and vitals, whilst many a deadly thrust had been given behind his shoulder-blades. So the fight went on, for nearly two hours, the huge

animal's attacks being always frustrated by the sand-throwing, while every appearance he made above the water was the signal to receive numerous fresh wounds. At length, fairly exhausted, his fierce energy and mighty strength alike subdued, he was dragged and held as far out of the water as it was possible to pull so great a weight ; what was gained was retained by taking a round-turn with the end of the rope about a neighbouring piece of rock, and then the sluggish, though savage, life was ultimately stabbed and hacked out of the monstrous, strange, and massive thing. The natives value the hippopotamus for his hide, his flesh, and his ivory.

After the victorious issue of their second hunt, we bade the Basuetlars adieu, left them rejoicing over the carcase, with hundreds of their compatriots, who had promptly assembled to the feast from neighbouring *kraals*, and rejoined our waggons in the evening.

Finding that it was impossible to cross the Limpopo with our ponderous vehicles, we made up our minds to abandon all idea of penetrating the country farther to the north, and so resolved to make direct for the Tatin. We were reconciled to this course from the fact that, since striking the river again, the quartz formation had given place to one of granite, which commenced in the immediate neighbourhood of the Limpopo's course, along which it continued, whilst we were positively assured that it also extended for many days' march to the north, when it gave place to "emshlope lecher" (white stones, or quartz). The natives were unanimous in this statement. We had no doubt that the granite extended a considerable distance, and we had no desire to penetrate still further in search of the mythic Ophir and fabled gold-fields, that ever receded to obscurity as we advanced. Even supposing that another belt of quartz formation really existed some hundreds of miles north of our position, and beyond the granitic strip, there was not any reason to believe that it might be auriferous, except only the vague fact that the Mashoona tribes still obtained the precious metal from somewhere, and that the untrustworthy Herr Mauch had reported the existence of a second gold-field some distance north of the Tatin—one of those very extraordinary and no less mythical spots whereat, as he declared, he "stood as it were transfixed, riveted to the place, struck with amaze-



PASS LEADING FROM THE VALLEY TO THE PLAINS.

ment and wonder at the sight, and for a few minutes was unable to use the hammer!"

About five weeks from the time when we first sighted the waters of the Limpopo, we began to approach the track, route, or so-called road which led across it to the Tatin. The hills of granite and basaltic rock now presented evident signs of some great volcanic convulsion, being thrown and tossed about in strangely rugged, ragged, and irregular contortions. In particular, the last valley through which we passed, before entering the extensive plains extending to and far beyond the drift or ford, attracted our attention, from the fantastic and precipitous nature of the stony hills by which it was

surrounded. Right in the narrow pass by which we reached the plains stood a conical hillock, and it was just as much as ever we could do to get our waggons past it, so small was the passage between this granite sentinel and the cliffs on either hand.

A few days' *trek* at a good rate over the plains or prairies brought us to the drift. At this part the bed and banks of the Limpopo are entirely fine sand. The Van Meyers' waggon led the way, but stuck fast in the middle of the river, here some eighty yards wide, with but little water, not more than two to three feet above the sand ; in fact, in the dry or winter season no water can be seen in the channels of the rivers about this part, though it can nearly always be obtained by making a little hole in the bed.

The soft and treacherous bottom yielded beneath the weight of the heavy waggon, which sank down to the axles of its wheels in the sand, the water almost reaching its floor ; it was fairly stuck. The driver, Mynheer, and Wilhelm yelled, shouted, "yaked," and cracked the whip in a furious manner ; but the unfortunate oxen splashed and floundered about in the water, puffing, panting, and snorting, tugging, jerking, and swerving from side to side, but all in vain. Our friends were stuck fast, and every instant the ponderous vehicle was settling down deeper and deeper.

There was no particular fear that it was in a quicksand, and would be likely to disappear altogether ; still, there was imminent risk of sinking so deep as to admit the water over the floor, and damage the goods stowed thereon.

Hastily disconnecting the *trek*-chain from our waggon, we drove our team into the river, ahead of the Van Meyers', and then, with the double span succeeded in extricating them, and landing them safely on the other bank, after which we returned with both teams for our own waggon, getting it over without any difficulty.

The country upon which we had entered, after leaving the hilly regions, was about the most wearisome and monotonous that can well be imagined. It was perfectly level, and of a dry, arid, sand soil, upon which grew, however, an interminable succession of bush ; it was a regular bush country. None of the trees attained a greater height than twenty to thirty feet, and the jungle

was composed of continuous extensive clumps, through which we had no little difficulty in following the road, for although here and there, on harder ground, the deep ruts made by waggon wheels marked the way, at other parts the loose sand had been blown over, and obliterated every trace.

Although now in the Matebele country—a tribe that has the reputation of being the most numerous, powerful, and formidable in South Africa—not a trace of inhabitant could we see in the shape of a *kraal*, although, now and then, a few of those strange, incomprehensible, pariah sort of beings, the "Vaalpens" of the Boers, made their appearance, to beg something to eat, drink, or barter with, from our white worships.

In appearance these singular people present no distinctive difference to other Kaffirs, unless, indeed, that they are even more uncouth and dirty. They seemed to start up, when they did appear, from the bushes on our road. They are the remnants of tribes which have been almost entirely exterminated by the fierce Matebeles, and now live—exactly like the bushmen further south—in the jungle. They act as a sort of frontier outpost, or body of spies and scouts, for their powerful masters. Nothing can pass the large strip of bush country lying to the south of the Matebele territory proper without their knowledge. Unseen themselves, they yet see everything; they are ubiquitous and omnipresent. They build no huts, but shelter themselves from the dews and storms of heaven with a few sticks and a bundle or two of grass placed against a tree. It is their home to-day, but they are gone on the morrow. They seem to lead a life of ceaseless and incessant wandering through the extensive bush country, and are never to be found settled at any particular spot; they rove and stroll about like very ill-conditioned and unquiet Gitanos, who have some sufficient reason to change the place of their habitation pretty often. Although we never could catch a glimpse of a "Vaalpen" by our own unaided efforts, yet we only had to fire a gun, when some of them would be sure to appear, with the hope, no doubt, of getting a feed. They are, as a rule, harmless and inoffensive. Many a lost hunter has owed his life to their assistance in discovering or guiding him. They must be an invaluable frontier guard to the Matebeles.

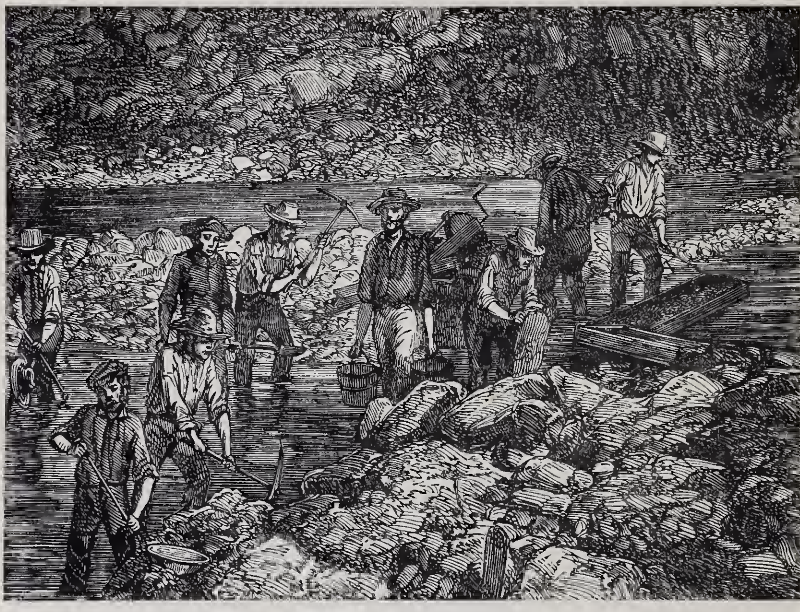
After crossing several small rivers, we reached the Tatin at last, and

found no less than about forty diggers assembled there, nearly all of whom were Englishmen, a few being old gold miners from Australia. They turned out to witness and welcome the new arrival. As we did not care to become "hail fellow well met" with all or any of them, especially considering the presence of the fair Carlotta, we did not give them to understand that our object was gold, but led them to infer that our party formed a travelling and hunting expedition. We also determined, after inspecting the works and operations going forward at this place, only a short distance across the waggon drift on the Tatin, to *trek* off some twenty or thirty miles, and encamp aloof from the digger community; not that its members were other than, in most cases, respectable men, but we did not require their society, neither did we intend to work in the unreasoning manner that they were; that is to say, without any positive indication of payable gold, they were sinking shafts through hard ground, which would necessitate months of heavy labour, and which, even if successful in striking a rich lode, could never be utilised or made to pay without the expenditure of a large capital in quartz-crushing machinery.

We asked to see samples of gold, but it was a counterpart of the Umtwalumi case. Only a few specks were to be seen. And this was the result of some months' work at the German, Mauch's, hammer-arresting and motion-transfixing discovery, which he subsequently had the amazing ignorance or mendacity to declare richer than the gold fields either of Australia or California!

It is true heaps of auriferous quartz were lying piled up around the mouths of several shafts being sunk by the men, but, although here and there you could pick out pieces in which tiny specks of gold were visible to the naked eye, it was evident to us, and especially to the "long Yankee," whose experience in quartz mining was most extensive, that the precious metal was far too scanty and irregularly distributed to prove nearly payable.

Two days' investigations quite satisfied our minds that we were as far from Ophir as ever; and we moved off with our waggons, following the course of the Tate, or Tatin, in order to have a prospect some distance further up its course.



DIGGERS AT THE TATIN.

About forty miles from the encampment we came across two parties of diggers, from Verulam and Maritzberg, in Natal, who were prospecting for alluvial gold at the first rocky part of the river that we had yet seen.

We outspanned near to this party for the night, and found that they had obtained a few grains of alluvial gold, after many weeks' steady prospecting about the river.

It was very disheartening, this changeless persistency with which the precious metal appeared only in such minute quantity.

As the diggers assured us that it was impossible to obtain a trace of gold except in the immediate vicinity of the Tatin, and as the geological appearance of the country was in accord with their assertion, we still followed the course of that river, instead of turning off to prospect in other directions.

The country about this part swarmed with snakes, although there was but little bush, that terminating some distance south of the Tatin.

The morning after our arrival at the prospecters' encampment, I was up at sunrise for a bathe in the river. As I was walking over the barren and stony ground between our waggons and the water, I became the witness to an extraordinary duel.

Hearing a violent sibilation, I looked in the direction of the sound, and saw two snakes, the one black and the other a bright green, moving rapidly round in a circle, apparently chasing each other. I stood still to watch their movements. After the chase had continued for several minutes, the green snake suddenly stopped, reared itself high erect upon its tail, and, with its flat, diamond-shaped, vicious-looking head waving from side to side, seemed about to strike. But the black one passed round it with great rapidity, continuing in a circle, but getting nearer at each revolution, until at length it also stopped, lifted itself up, and appeared to be on the point of darting upon its ready antagonist. The latter, however, was too quick for it. No sooner had the black snake halted, and made ready to strike, than the green one darted upon it like a flash of lightning, and down they both went, wriggling, twisting, and contorting themselves in the dust.

Just at this moment, as ill-luck would have it, up came Monsieur Louis, armed with a formidable snake-stick, and also on his way to the river. No sooner did he see the object upon which I was gazing, than, before I could prevent him, he ran in and killed both reptiles with his stick.

"Confound you!" I roared; "what have you done that for? I wanted to see the effect their poison would have upon each other."

"Aha, mein poy, dat ist all ver goot. Put spose vun ov der snaag hat peen zo zmart ast do get avay, eh? Dat ist more petterish goot fur to make sure ov der do."

And this was all the consolation I received for the defeat of my scientific investigation as to the relative effect of serpent venom upon its own species.

We found the green snake twisted tightly around the black one, which it had seized just at the back of the neck, its fangs being firmly fixed in that,

the most vital and disabling spot. The black snake would, of course, have been perfectly helpless in this position, although it was the largest, measuring about seven feet and a half to its enemy's six. Both were *marmbars*, and it would have been not a little interesting and valuable to science to have seen the effect of their deadly poison on one another.

This part of the Tatin was frequented by large herds of buffalo, and many elephant-hunters, either by attacking or getting in the way of these



BUFFALO AT THE TATIN.

congregated numbers of the fierce, shaggy, and almost champion of quadrupeds, have lost their lives. As we approached the water we saw, in the distance, many of those formidable animals going down to the river to drink. They had been seen from the diggers' encampment, too, and one of the men came galloping over the plain to try and get a shot, but in vain, as the keen-scented and wary buffalo kept out of range; they were becoming wild and watchful since the strangers had arrived in their wilds and were often on the scout for buffalo beef.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Start for the Source of the Tatin—A Bad Shot at Ostriches—Geological and Auriferous Formation at the so-called "Tatin Gold Fields"—Ophir still fades—Workings of Ancient Diggers: Remains of a Stone Fort built by them; Who were they? Portuguese, or Egyptians of Solomon?—The Source of the Tatin—Adventure with a Vicious Rhinoceros—We reach the Matabele Outposts, and are refused permission to enter their Country—Their Origin and Appearance.

LEAVING the prospecting party of diggers to their unprofitable employment, we proceeded on our way, intending to have a look at the geological nature of the country towards the source of the Tatin, after which we would turn back to the north-east, and so make a long circuit to the northward of the spot where mining operations were being definitely pursued.

Early in the morning, and just at dusk in the evening, game nearly always appeared in enormous quantities. Every wild animal that exists in Africa had its representative here. At night we invariably collected our oxen, *kraaled* them, as before, between the waggons, and kept fires burning all night as a protection against lions, whose roaring could be heard quite regularly after sunset, though most frequently after midnight and towards daylight.

Occasionally we saw the ostrich, though seldom in greater number than a pair at the same time. I had the misfortune, once, to miss a capital opportunity of bagging one of those valuable and immense birds.

Just as the sun was rising over the hills to the eastward of the river, and shedding a flood of golden light upon its glittering surface, whilst the tall, bright rays shot up into the deeper blue overhead, and gradually blended together in putting the last shadowy, cool, and silent traces of the expiring night to flight, I was strolling along the western bank, gun in hand.

I was wandering on without any particular object in view—for we had plenty of meat, and I never committed wanton slaughter. Although nothing definite occupied my mind, I liked to be alone sometimes—alone with Nature—with nothing but the heaven, the earth, and the great solitary sun for my

companions. I always regret the loss of those strolls in the early morning which I have enjoyed in many wild countries, at just the moment before and after all living things break forth into sudden and joyous life for another day. There is an indescribable pleasure and exhilaration in this unbroken and utter communing with the grandeur, being, and highly-exciting though subdued influence of external Nature, requiring a far abler pen than mine to depict, so I will return to the event I was about to narrate.

The dreamy absorbed reverie in which I was wandering along the sands of that obscure little river in the far interior of Africa was suddenly interrupted and effectually dispersed by the bursting forth, close at hand, of a loud roaring noise, which I took for the dreaded voice of the lion, although, at the same time, detecting a harsh, bodyless tone, hardly to be reconciled with the deep, sonorous, and diapason volume of sound that rolls forth from the mighty throat of the king of beasts.

Still, at the first moment of surprise, I had no idea that it was anything else than a lion's roar I heard. It sounded close by, just over a bank of sand above where I stood. Cautiously cocking my rifle, and loosening the revolver in my belt, I crept up to have a look at the rude interrupter of my early morning meditations, not sure but that it might also be his intention to make his breakfast of me.

As I raised my head above the bank the same roaring cry broke forth again, but this time in duplicate; and, lo! there before me, only fifteen or twenty yards away, instead of two mighty lions, stood a pair of great ostriches, their necks outstretched towards me, their beaks opening and shutting, and the leonine noise evidently proceeding from their throats. Even as I appeared they were off like the wind; their long legs flew out with wonderful velocity, and the great birds went bounding several yards at every stride, trampling over, and instantaneously distancing, a small herd of antelopes with which they were at first mingled. In my hurry and confusion I levelled my rifle and fired, but, instead of hitting either of the feathery giants, killed an *oribe.* Even by the time I had inserted another cartridge in my Snider they were out of range. So I just shouldered the buck, and set off to meet the waggons, though I could not, on the way, avoid sundry unpleasant reflections as to a



A SHOT AT OSTRICHES.

certain famous sportsman who is reported to have shot at a crow and hit a haystack.

As nothing particularly noteworthy occurred during our journey to the source of the Tatin, I may as well give a description of the so-called gold field on the banks of that river. This was the spot first discovered or reported as one of those two immense and richly auriferous districts men-

tioned in the letter quoted in our first chapter; and, by many who had not visited the country—ourselves amongst the deluded number—was at once theoretically seized upon as a part of the golden regions of the fabulous Ophir.

At the time we visited the Tatin, three deep shafts were being sunk, all near to the place first broken into by the first party of diggers, who proceeded from Potchefstroom under the command of a Mr. Black.

But although contemporary records have no knowledge of previous mining explorers to these, and although neither ancient nor modern history makes any mention of the fact, it is, nevertheless, not a little singular that this very site should have been thoroughly known and industriously worked in distant times. The extent of the auriferous formation has not been ascertained beyond an approximate estimation. Although gold is not visible in any of the other quartz reefs which crop up in many places round about, yet, deeper down, they may contain the precious metal, though it would certainly be in very small quantity. The size of the spot which is known to contain gold, and which is the only part that has been worked by the ancient miners, is not, altogether, more than half a square mile in superficial area. Over this extent of ground the white quartz crops up abundantly, whilst ironstone exists in unrivalled profusion, and the low hills about are all formed of solid granite, or mica schist, slate, quartz, and feldspar, or a hard calcined sandstone. This formation pervaded the whole country, which was primary, and contained no "made ground" or alluvial soil. The auriferous patch was literally honeycombed with ancient shafts and workings.

From the deep shafts being sunk, as well as from numerous smaller ones in various places, besides some of the ancient holes which had been cleared out by the present influx of Anglo-Saxons, we were enabled to ascertain that all the ancient shafts were oblique, leading down to the underground drives at an easy angle. This gave us the idea that those ancient gold-seekers, whoever they may have been, obtained the ore by walking up with it instead of using a windlass over a perpendicular shaft. Down to a depth of fifty or sixty feet, as nearly as we could judge, almost every particle of the auriferous quartz reefs had been carefully extracted; the stone being replaced, and the vacant

spaces filled up with earth and pebbles from the surface, in order, we supposed, to keep the ground firm.

The best and most likely spot seemed to us a place claimed by two Australians, Dalton and James, who had already got down over fifty feet in the hill—called "Black's Hill," I think, but am not quite sure, for I cannot now remember whether that name applied to it or another in the neighbourhood. Twenty feet down they had encountered a small reef containing slight traces of gold, but at fifty feet they had struck better stone, and had also come upon the very spot where their unknown predecessors had left off working, perhaps ages ago! The old drive was still blackened with the smoke made by its former workers, either by their blasting operations, or by lighting fires to crack and loosen the hard quartz! Whoever they may have been, it is quite certain that they were thoroughly acquainted with the geological conditions under which the precious metal occurred, and that they possessed no slight knowledge of how to mine for and obtain it in the bowels of the earth. Their drives and sinkings had been well, carefully, and thoroughly carried out. It was soon evident to ourselves, and was agreed to by the diggers, that they had exhausted everything approaching to payable stone as deep as they had gone. Two points, however, occurred to us. In the first place, their drives were made far larger than necessary—probably for the convenience of carrying up the ore in baskets—which made the danger of falling-in greater; whilst, instead of being timbered, the workings were refilled with earth, at, of course, a far greater amount of labour—thus proved to have been of little value. The other point that struck our minds was the fact that, without perpendicular shafts (although there were signs of two levels, one below the other, the communication being by the large oblique shafts before mentioned) they could not have fairly tested the nature of the ground at any considerable depth.

Upon another subject we nearly all agreed, namely, that no alluvial gold existed at the Tatin, and that the surface, or uppermost quartz reefs (those untouched as well as such as had been only partially worked by our mysterious predecessors) would not pay for crushing.

It is just possible, however, that the unknown miners may have left the best stone untouched, either because their operations were put a stop to before

they had been able to reach it, or because they could not get down sufficiently deep by reason of defective means, knowledge, and resources. This belief is not without good reason. The quartz increases in richness the deeper it extends, and the main reefs have not yet been touched, except at one or two points, by some of the present diggers. That taken out by the ancient miners seems to have been merely the "blows-ups" or "leaders," and, I believe, could not have yielded more than the small amount of two to three pennyweights of gold per ton of stone. This would never have paid Europeans, and we are advanced a step in calculating who those people were, for either the labour must have been voluntary, or that of slaves.

Judging from the best samples of quartz obtainable at a depth of over sixty feet, from the main reefs, I do not believe that any stone exists at the Tatin, unless at a very considerable depth, that would yield more than half an ounce of the precious metal to the ton. This pays well enough as the proportion in Australia, but would never do so in these distant wilds of Africa, where native labour cannot be obtained, and which the journey is so costly and expensive to reach. Besides, very valuable, extensive, and powerful machinery would have to be carried and erected there; which is an undertaking that I, for one, should be extremely loath to have a stake in, although there are some, including Dalton and James, who maintain that their claims will yet pay well. I hope so, for their sakes—some of those hardy and persevering men having toiled away for many long and weary months beneath the fierce African sun of the interior, sinking their shafts through tough slate, flinty, conglomerate, and adamantine quartz.

Even supposing that payable quartz does exist at the Tatin (and the question is unsolved to this day, September, 1870), it is at so great a depth, and will require such effective, rapid, and careful crushing, that only rich companies would be able to work it.

The geological formation has been described, and it only remains to add that the physical features of the neighbourhood indicate a slight or partial upheaval, in which only the smallest veins, or "leaders," of quartz have reached the surface. The hills about the Tatin all present this appearance; the rest of the country being flat, of primal origin, and being covered with the

scantiest sub-soil, nowhere more than two or three feet in depth, and frequently exposing the bare, igneous rock, as it was cooled and deposited at the formation.

Besides the ancient workings, we found but one other trace of former miners, but that was particularly attractive and interesting.

About three quarters of a mile west of the waggon ford or drift rose one of the highest hills in the neighbourhood, but a short distance from the river's bank. It was formed apparently of nothing but ironstone, stood perhaps a thousand feet above the plain, and bore on its summit the interesting object—no other than a circular stone-work, or wall, eight feet high, three feet broad at the top, and surrounding an area about fifty feet in diameter.

This work was in good condition, and was well built. Little of it had been destroyed, but we were puzzled as to whether that had been thrown down by the decaying hand of Time or by the violence of man. The stones had not been cut, though evidently selected for a flat shape, and were cemented together. We had but little doubt that the structure had been built as a fortress, or place of strength, although, inside it, we found the ruins of blast furnaces, and, amongst the slag even yet remaining, traces that they had been used for smelting iron.

Who were they, those strange, mysterious gold-seekers, who had left no other trace behind? That stone-work fairly puzzled us, for we had never previously seen any such thing during our African travelling. If natives had been the miners, it seemed very extraordinary that they should have built a thing so contrary to their ways, habits, and knowledge. A stone wall! Why, no such thing existed any where else in Kaffir Land! Although we carefully searched in every likely place, not a further vestige of our predecessors in the weary, profitless search after Ophir could we find.

After grave deliberation and mature consideration, we unanimously came to the opinion that the works had not been abandoned more than a few hundred years; that they had been carried on by the old and numerous Mashoona tribe, who inhabited these parts a century or so ago, when they were driven away, and almost exterminated, by the Matabeles; and that, in all probability, the operations had been carried on under the superintendence

of Portuguese. In no other way could we account for the wall; and it is well known that that people obtained much gold from the south-east part of Africa about the period selected.

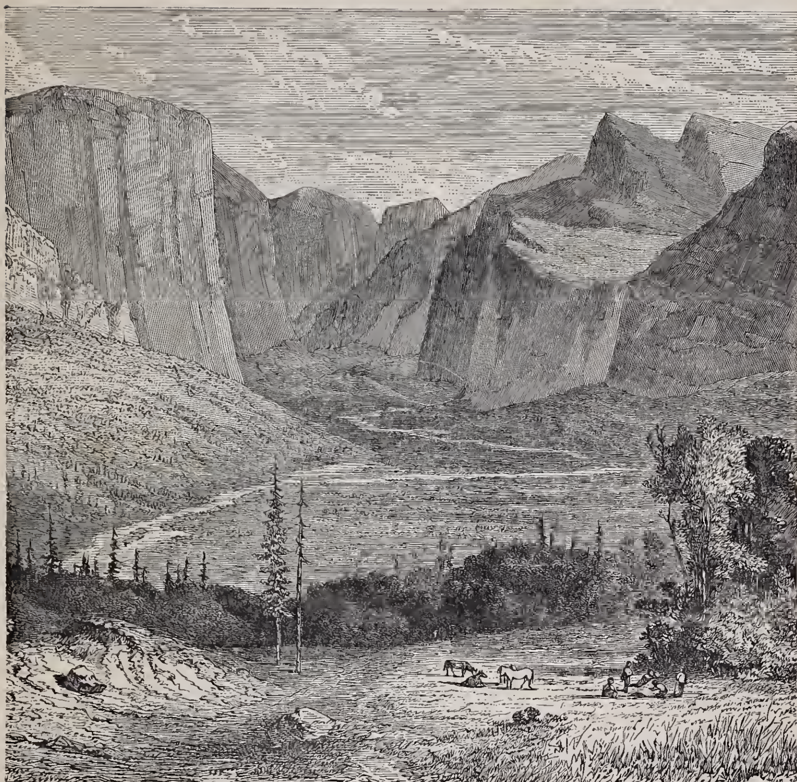
As for the theory of those who ascribe to the ancient Egyptians this former gold-digging, and consider the Tatin really a part of Solomon's Ophir—understanding the word as a generic name like India—I do not consider they have an argument worth listening to. In the first place those monumental and architectural loving people would have raised something besides, and, certainly, something very different to that rough stone wall, supposing that the place ever formed a portion of the long-known, and, therefore, occupied regions of Ophir. Secondly, it is impossible that either the small stone wall or the underground workings could have lasted during all those hundreds, if not thousands of years, and now present an appearance of such good preservation. Besides, the vast quantity of gold carried by the fleets of Tharshish never came from such wretchedly poor places as the Tatin, from where it would take the result of something like a thousand years' crushing by one of the modern quartz-crushing machines to obtain anything like the golden freight in *one* fleet's cargo.

No! The auriferous glories of mythic Ophir cannot rest for a single instant near the Tatin.

After all our trouble, travel, and expense, we felt perfectly well satisfied that we were now just as distant from it as ever we were.

Our theory was further supported by the fact that the remnants of Mashoonas are still the iron-smelters and blacksmiths of the whole country; and by the information we obtained from the natives of various tribes that the fathers of the Mashoonas had dug holes all over the land, especially to the north and east (nearer the Zambesi), "in a country," they said, "which is full of white stones" (quartz?) "and contains large rivers of running water."

There are not any natives at the Tatin. The nearest *kraals* are those of the Matabele outposts, about eighty miles north; and those of the chief, Machin, of the Bamangwato tribe of Bechuanas, some two hundred miles to the south-east. This large extent of uninhabited country is used as a grazing ground for the Matabele herds. The soil is so arid and stony that it would be



THE SOURCE OF THE TATIN.

useless for any other purpose, though covered in many parts with a short, strong grass.

After four days' journey we arrived at the foot of the mountains whence the Tatin takes its rise. The waggons could not proceed any further, so were outspanned, whilst five of our party rode forward on horseback. Towards sunset we entered the valley that formed the source of the river, and a grand piece of scenery it was.

Huge cliffs of granite and porphyry rose to a perpendicular height of several hundred feet on every side, and were heaped together, contorted and riven, by former mighty convulsions of Nature. From the furthest extremity of this rock-bound valley, trickled the Tatin in a tiny sparkling silver stream, through a verdant little plain, soon to be lost in the desert sand beyond.

We off-saddled at a green little eminence overlooking the valley, where we cooked our supper, and pitched the small tent we had brought with us for the night; taking care to picket our horses securely, and leaving our driver and forelouper feeding a large fire all night to keep off lions. This they were pretty sure to do for their own sakes, as they had to sleep in the open, rolled in their dingy blankets, by the side of the blazing wood.

At daylight in the morning we were up and at work prospecting the small alluvial plain through which the little stream slowly meandered on its way to the sandy plains.

The "long Yankee" this day very nearly lost his horse. Not feeling very well I remained at the tent to prepare breakfast. In the meanwhile, whilst Louis, Wilhelm, and Tom Ashwell proceeded to sink a small trial shaft by the edge of the stream near at hand, the latter's brother, accompanied by the two Kaffirs, went further on.

It seems that he had picked out a place to wash a few panfuls from the bed of the river, and, having left his horse hitched to a tree, they were proceeding to do so, when the wild screaming neighing of the poor animal recalled them in haste and alarm to the spot, just in time to see a young rhinoceros making a furious attack upon it. In a moment, at a distance of less than twenty yards, and from a most favourable position to the side and rear of the fierce and formidable assailant, the "long Yankee" made a capital and successful shot, by sending a Snider ball right in at its vulnerable spot behind the shoulder, and rolling it over in the agonies of death.

The result of our prospecting the source of the Tatin was absolutely *nil*, and not a vestige of quartz reef existed in the neighbourhood.

We now *treked* off to the north-east, so as to strike the Matabele outposts, and, besides prospecting thus all round the very limited auriferous

locality—except to the south, which had been seen by all the diggers, however—try to obtain leave to proceed on to the imaginative Mauch's northern gold field.

Within a week we arrived at the *kraal* of Manjama, captain of the



THE "LONG YANKEE'S" HORSE IN DANGER.

outpost, without experiencing any mishap or adventure, and without discovering the slightest trace of the precious metal, although we came across several extensive quartz formations.

At this time—the middle of March, 1870—several members of a gold-digging party from Durban, under a Mr. McNeil, had gone into the Matabele country, ostensibly to visit a missionary located at that part, and to build a

new house for him, but, in reality, to try and reach the reported northern gold fields.

We found that Manjama was a tall, middle-aged, determined-looking warrior; and although he received us in a rather friendly manner—not forgetting, however, to let us know that his wives were fond of large blue beads—he yet positively refused to let us pass his post.

As it would have been simply useless and absurd to attempt to enter the country under false pretences, even if not dangerous, we at once stated our wishes were to penetrate to the north, where the formation of white stones existed, and search for gold. In a country such as that of the Matabeles it would have been utterly impossible to prospect in secret. The natives seem very jealous of the presence of white men at all, even as hunters, and we had reason to believe that the Dutch Boers of the Transvaal Republic had further alarmed and excited them by communicating the treacherous information that if they once allowed gold diggers to visit their territory and discover the precious metal, such numbers would soon follow as would be able to drive them out and seize upon their possessions.

The Boers, no doubt, conveyed the truth in this statement, and their motive is easily seen. Having been driven from point to point in South Africa by the advance and progress of the Anglo-Saxon, they were desirous of remaining unmolested in the patriarchal, primitive, and supremely unprogressive life they lead at the new country which they have reclaimed from the wilderness. The influx of a gold-mining population meant the destruction of their pastoral existence, and would, sooner or later, have driven them forth as wanderers again. If self-preservation be the first law of nature, they were right enough, for they can never amalgamate with the go-ahead Anglo-Saxon race; but it was certainly unfriendly.

Moselekatse, the famous paramount chief or king of the Matabeles, had lately died, but Manjama sent our request to the regent, some hundred miles within the frontier. In six days runners returned with the pleasing information that on no account were we to be admitted.

We pleaded as precedent the admission of McNeil and party, but were informed that they were not gold seekers. We took care not to enlighten the

obstructive savages, though it destroyed our only argument. At the same time we felt certain that the object of the adventurous party would be defeated. The result proved our opinion was correct, for it came to grief, having lost several of its members by fever during the stoppage to which it was subjected at Inyati by the suspicious Matabeles, and had to return unsuccessful, without having proceeded a hundred miles on the way to the



MATABELE KAFFIRS.

deceptive El Dorado. I believe that they had obtained permission to proceed as hunters, for I feel quite sure that the Matabeles will never allow any gold diggers to enter their country unless a high official is sent to make terms with them. In such event, I believe that no difficulty would be found. Manjama only repeated the words of the regent when he told us that—

"We want a 'great chief' of the English to come and *indarbar*. Who are we that our presence should be ignored, our rights and customs unheeded?

And who are you that you should come into our country as though you had a right to it? A 'great chief' must come and talk with us before we can think of opening our territory to every *umlungo* who chooses to enter it. Much would have to be arranged before we could permit you to dig for gold."

The Matabeles are only Zulus under another name. They are a fine, stalwart race. Nearly all Manjama's warriors were men standing six feet high; many were even taller; and all were powerful fellows, their heads dented and their bodies scarred with wounds received during their extermination of surrounding tribes, the original owners of the soil. They affected much finery in the way of beads, paint, ostrich feathers, and *krosses* of leopard skin.

CHAPTER XIX.

Matabele Elephant Hunters—The Sword is Victorious—Reasons for Abandoning the Search after Ophir—Most Likely Spot for Gold in South-East Africa—Start on the Back Journey—A Bush Fire—Shoshong and its Chief, Machin—A Ruse to avoid Extortion—Dance of the Bechuana Women at Night—Incidents of our Journey through the Transvaal Republic—Arrive and Separate at Potchefstroom—Marriage and Conclusion.

ALTHOUGH Manjama stuck to his orders, and would not allow us to pass his station—which we were half inclined to do *bon gré mal gré*—he yet behaved civilly enough in every other respect.

Amongst the warriors were some elephant hunters, who form a distinct class of the Matabeles, and are men renowned for their dexterity and courage. It takes years of hard practice, danger, and experience in chasing the largest, strongest, most formidable—excepting, perhaps, the rhinoceros—and most sagacious of beasts, before a man can become a member of the "inshlovu ipisi impi" or "elephant-hunting band." These are the men who obtain the large quantities of ivory with which the tribe supplies the white traders who are always visiting their country. They are well-to-do in the way of wives, cattle, blankets, beads, and brass bangles, the sole articles of value in Kaffirdom, so their dangerous vocation is at all events a paying one.

We were astonished not a little, when upon asking how they hunted the leviathan quadruped, they informed us that it was with swords they fought, vanquished, and put to death the mighty animal. Naturally enough, we had been wondering what sort of pits they used, having a vivid recollection of the East Indian elephant *battue*. But to think of these naked savages using nothing but the sword! It was a weapon that we had not yet seen amongst the Kaffirs, and we asked to have a look at their swords, fully expecting to see blades at least equal to that terrible and famous one of the herculean and celebrated William Wallace. The arms they produced, however, were only about thirty-eight inches long in the blade, but were very broad, sharp, and heavy. The metal seemed highly tempered, but, like Japanese swords, without elasticity, and was double-edged, each being ground as sharp as a

razor. They were certainly deadly weapons, and one blow with any of them would have sent a man's head flying off like the top of a carrot.

Upon expressing our wish to see an elephant hunt by those redoubtable Nimrods of his, the chief, Manjama, complaisantly assented, and gave orders to have one on the morrow.

After an early breakfast we all set forth with our waggons—as the route chosen was on our road back to the Tatin—accompanied by a dozen of the elephant hunters, the chief, and about a hundred well-armed warriors carrying guns, bows and arrows, *assegais*, and spears.

Half the day passed over before we managed to start any of the *very* heavy game, although they were rather numerous in the neighbourhood at that time of the year. Their spoor was visible in many places, but it was not till past noon that we came across what the hunters at once pronounced were fresh tracks. It was plain that the marks were those of a single elephant, and the Kaffirs told us that we should see some good sport, for it must be what they called an *umxotywa*, or "outcast"—one of those turned out of the herd, forsaken by all the rest of the great beasts, and left to wander alone and solitary. Why the outcast elephant should be subjected to this unbrotherly treatment deponent sayeth not; but the fact is well known, and that such lonely animals are far more fierce and vicious than the others.

After following the spoor for half an hour or so, it led into a small thicket. The preparations for unearthing the brute were soon made. Surrounding the wood with his hundred warriors, they entered it, shouting, yelling, firing their guns, and advancing, so as to drive the solitary elephant towards the only unguarded avenue, just outside which, however, the hunters proper, stripped naked, and sword in hand, were lying in ambuscade. At a little distance from this opening, and hidden by a clump of bushes, we had halted with our waggons.

Just as the yelling and firing seemed to have converged towards the centre of the wood, there arose a crashing and crackling, and the next moment, out of the expected opening rushed the great animal, trumpeting with a shrill, fierce noise, and flinging his trunk about in a rapid manner.



THE SWORD IS VICTORIOUS.

No sooner had he fairly reached the open plain than the daring swordsmen emerged from the spread-out ambuscade they had formed, and sprang towards him with extraordinary rapidity and agility.

The doomed brute halted for an instant, as if in a state of uncertainty and amazement, then rushed furiously at its nearest assailant, trumpeting, and lifting its writhing trunk high into the air.

Springing aside with wonderful dexterity, the charged hunter inflicted a terrible wound upon one of the elephant's fore-legs, as it dashed past, before able to turn after him.

At the very same moment two more of the valiant swordsmen made

a cut at each of the gigantic monster's hind legs, only narrowly missing to hamstring him.

The sagacious animal seemed to appreciate the danger of his position, and gave up the combat at once. Unable to regain the thicket, which was now fringed with the numerous beaters, he plunged forward at a great rate, quite as fast as a horse could gallop, and strove to escape over the plain. But half the hunters were right in his way, and, just opening out to let him pass, immediately sprang back upon his flanks, and three of the keen, heavy, and dexterously-wielded swords bit deep into his flesh. The same fore-leg previously wounded was again badly gashed, and both his hind legs were hamstrung. The poor brute was a full-grown male, nearly nine feet high, and, of course, rolled over on the ground at once, coming down with a noise like the fall of a mountain. The sword was victorious. In the hands of such strong, agile, and courageous men, it was far more than a match for that most mighty of living things.

A single elephant has no chance whatever with these practised and skilful hunters. When one witnesses a combat such as that described, it is at once evident that there is far less danger to the men than the uninitiated would believe. It is only when the gigantic animal appears in herds that the valorous *inshlovu ipisi impi* experience great peril. This they themselves admitted to us, and declared that the "outcast" elephant was their especial and easy victim.

Leaving the Matabeles rejoicing around the prostrate giant of the plains, we bade them adieu, made the chief and the hunters a handsome present of beads, and went on our way to the Tatin.

Before starting on this homeward path, and turning back in our journey, the point had been thoroughly discussed in full assembly.

Considering the practical denial the Tatin presented to Mauch's mendacious report on the auriferous regions he had discovered, we saw no inducement to attempt a further journey of some hundreds of miles into the far interior to find the second of his so-called gold fields when we had the first before us, and in opposition to the positive injunction of the leaders of a tribe that could muster something like twenty thousand armed

warriors. Besides, for a further travel into the wilderness we should require at least another six months' store of provisions and ammunition; not a particle of which could be obtained nearer than the town of Potchefstroom in the Transvaal, some three hundred miles on our way home. So we gave up the search "After Ophir," and turned on the back trail for civilisation again.

As for Mauch's northern gold district, we felt but the slightest faith in it, having seen what his southern was made of. There is, however, no doubt that another quartz formation exists about three hundred miles north of the Tatin; but there is no reason (beyond Mauch's testimony) to believe that it is auriferous. I do not think one speck of gold obtained from that locality is either to be seen or to be found in existence, however much interested people—such as the land speculators of Natal, referred to in a previous chapter—may puff up, exaggerate, and extol the auriferous wealth of a spot that is absolutely unknown to them, which no one else than the proved untrustworthy Mauch can even describe, and which are situated goodness knows where.

If any payable deposits of the precious metal exist in South-East Africa they will be found between latitude 15° to 21° south, and longitude 30° to 36° east. This is the region to which the Mashoonas have retreated; it lies between the rivers Zambesi and Limpopo, partly north of the former, and not far from the coast. The result of incessant inquiry from the natives of many tribes satisfied us that this is the part whence comes the gold still brought to Quillimane, Inhambane, and other of the Portuguese settlements on the east coast, by Kaffirs, from the interior. Altogether we had reason to believe that extensive quartz formations existed throughout that region; that it contained small quantities of the precious metal; but that no evidence existed of any rich, or, what Europeans would call "payable gold field."

I would have been willing to persist in our journey and explore this country, but every one else was anxious to return. Roger was impatient to get married—I don't believe that anything less than the veritable walls of a city of Ophir actually in sight would have tempted him forward, and

further from churches. Louis and our American friends were now desirous of taking up their land grants in Natal and settling there ; the former as a tobacco planter, the latter as coffee planters ; whilst the Van Meyers were only worrying to return to the pastoral, patriarchal life—the Elysium, the *ne plus ultra* of a Boer's existence—the herds of cattle, the flocks of sheep, the secluded farm-house, and the broad stretch of grazing ground to which they had been accustomed all their lives. The fever—*auri sacra fames*—had subsided. We were heartily sick and tired of searching after that Ophir which never came nearer, never seemed to become less distant, however far we travelled ; and so, with one accord, the signal was made for retiring. Although we had been put to great expense, it cannot fairly be said to have been altogether in vain. True, we did not find gold ; but then we improved both health and mind by the journey ; we saw new country, fresh phases of Nature, and became acquainted with further races of men ; things, I take it, not altogether valueless and useless to this our pilgrimage through life. At all events, I, for my part, felt amply repaid by the profits, knowledge, and experience gained by the journey, even although they were not in the form of weighty golden nuggets as, at one time, in the vainness of our imaginations, we had foolishly hoped they would be.

About half way between Manjama's *kraals* and the Tatin, near to the river Ramokaban, we saw one of those grandest sights of the wilderness, a great prairie fire.

Had it not been for our American friend's experience in such matters, we might have been in serious danger. As it was, however, no sooner did we perceive the dense column of smoke, broken now and then with the forked tongues of fierce red flame darting forth and springing forward with incredible rapidity, than our measures of precaution were taken. The fire was dead to windward of us, the breeze was strong, and it was evidently approaching with the extraordinary speed so often described by those who have been fortunate enough to witness one of the grandest and most terrible sights in Nature.

Treking across the river as fast as we could, we went on for a short

distance to where it flowed between steep and rocky banks, at a deep gorge, which promised to interpose an effectual barrier to the progress of the fire demon hasting so furiously towards us. Halting at this place, we took the further precaution recommended by the "Long Yankee," and set fire to the thick grass and brambles just to leeward of our position. The flames rose up and increased, and soon went roaring and leaping away with the wind, burning everything clean off to the ground, and leaving a bare brown, smouldering, and ash-strewn plain upon which we could remain in safety.

Gradually, as the great conflagration to windward approached, wild animals, startled from their coverts by this the most terrible, dreaded, and irresistible of all dangers, rushed wildly past, whilst birds of every sort flew shrieking away. The leopard and the lion ceased to destroy their weaker neighbours, whilst the savage hawks—so plentiful in Africa—fled harmlessly above by the side of little feathery songsters whom they had never before approached except to slaughter and devour. All minor strife, natural antagonism of species, and preying upon one another, subsided into the one absorbing principle of self-preservation. The varied life that fled past us, now singly, then in groups, anon in vast herds, had but one object—and possessed it in common, to the utter exclusion of all other feelings—and that was to get away from the consuming demon rushing after them so fast and furious.

We were gazing after the animals just flying away at their utmost speed to leeward, when a mighty bellowing and a thunderous trampling sounding from the other side of the river recalled our attention to the approaching fire.

A vast herd of buffalo were rushing straight towards the steepest part of the deep gully through which the river flowed, and the fiery furnace, now one sheet of vivid flame far as the eye could reach along the western horizon, was at their heels.

Never shall I forget that sight. One over the other, piled sometimes two or three deep, rolled and tumbled those shaggy animals, as, to the number of several hundred, they plunged down the steep, almost precipitous descent,

without a moment's pause. At one part of the chasm there was, it is true, a sort of pass or track leading down to the water, but it was almost perpendicular. By it the majority of the parched, panting, and maddened animals descended, jammed into a solid mass which saved them from the fall they must otherwise have experienced. But many, pushed out by numbers from this narrow descent, fell headlong from the steeper places, and were either dashed to pieces themselves upon the rocks below, or fell upon and crushed some of their unfortunate companions who had successfully descended the dangerous pass.

Dozens of the wretched beasts were crushed, gored, and trampled to death. At the bottom of the precipitous descent, a great heap of the dead and dying was lying piled up, over which the great body of the herd passed in safety. Wolves, lions, leopards, deer and other smaller animals, ran, jumped, and scrambled over the backs of the buffalo, and all eagerly plunged into the water, several feet deep at that spot. We even saw five or six horses amongst the varied members of that terrible stampede, and most of them were killed. Where they came from we could not tell, as there are not any wild horses in those parts; we therefore concluded that they must have belonged either to some Kaffirs or a hunting expedition, though we never heard any tidings of the latter, if such a party had been in danger from the conflagration.

Unable to ascend the steep bank on our side, the swarming mass of life below spread out on either side, fleeing up or down the stream until the lower ground was reached, when they set forward again over the flames as fast as they could go.

And now we had the full spectacle of the prairie or bush fire right before us. Over the grass the flames ran along at a speed defying calculation; like fiery fingers far in front projecting tongues of flame stretched out in advance of the main body. Although we had outspanned our waggons and firmly picketed our horses and oxen a distance of at least a third of a mile from the river's bank, yet a fine, pungent, and impalpable smoke almost suffocated us, though the great and dense white volume rolled along high overhead. It was with the utmost difficulty that we prevented our animals from breaking

loose. Whenever the flames came to a clump of bush there was a loud sputtering and hissing, a momentary pause, a cloud of blacker smoke, and then a deeper glow than elsewhere as the vegetation became red hot before subsiding into dust and ashes. Whenever a tree was swallowed up by the resistless element, a few thin, serpentine, wreathy forks of flame first crept up the trunk, ran along the branches, and then suddenly burst forth in a broad sheet of fire, first withering away the leaves, then lingering with a vivid, red-heat glow upon the limbs—the growth of ages—and lastly shooting high up through the dense smoke cloud above, as a great pile of roaring flame fed by the massive trunk.

The heat from that extensive conflagration was almost intolerable, even at the distance we were situated. It was very fortunate that we had adopted the American backwoodsman's plan to escape it, instead of trusting solely to the river, for, at either termination of the steep and rocky piece of ground, the burning ashes and the heat ignited the grass and bush on our side, and would, of course, have destroyed us had it not been for the large space already cleared by the fire we had started at several intervals along an extended line.

It was with no little joy that we hailed the moment when the fiery tempest had passed beyond us, and was roaring, flaring, and rushing along far to leeward on either flank of, and striving to overtake, the blaze that we had kindled. The atmosphere had been that of Pandemonium. Parched, dried, and almost suffocated with the hot air of that great furnace, we nearly burst ourselves with the huge draughts of pure ether that we gulped down when it had passed over.

How the bush fire originated we could not tell. Most likely it had arisen through the strong wind spreading fires lighted by the natives to burn off old grass, either for grazing or for agricultural purposes; or the excessive heat of the sun may have been the cause.

We made but a short stay of three more days at the Tatin, finding nothing further worthy of remark there, except that two of the gold-seeking parties had left it in disgust, and started on their return to Natal, whilst one had arrived from King William's Town.

On the 14th of April we set out from the Tatin on our return journey, *viâ* Bamangwato and the Transvaal Republic.

As the dry or winter season, which extends from about the middle of May to the middle of November, was fast approaching, we travelled as fast as it was possible for our oxen to go, and, the waggons being pretty light by this time, whilst the road was hard and in good condition, we made rapid progress. During the winter months, through the extreme scarcity of rain, the *veld* or plains become dry and arid, the grass becoming brown and withered, the streams and rivers dried up. There is nothing but the poorest and scantiest of pasture to be found for cattle, and water can scarcely anywhere be obtained except by digging in the dry beds of the water-courses. These were the evils which we felt anxious to escape, and for nearly five hundred miles a track of country most subjected to such periodic visitations stretched before us. For more than a hundred miles, during six days' *trek*, we passed the bush country, a flat level covered with a dense, low jungle, averaging from fifteen to twenty-five feet high. This style of scenery is, without exception, the most monotonous and trying of any. Nowhere could the eye command a distance of more than a few yards in any direction. From this hateful district we emerged upon the *veld* and *kopjes*, a grassy country with numerous low hills.

In nine days we reached the great *kraal* or town of Shoshong, the principal place of the Bamangwato tribe, who are now ruled by Machin, the successor of the well-known chief, Secomo. This place on the maps is placed a great deal too far to the west, for we found that it bore almost due south from the Tatin, whereas, according to the ingenious hydrographers who have "done" those parts, it should have been nearer south-east. In fact, instead of forming almost one angle of a right-angled triangle with the Tatin and the Transvaal town of Rustenberg for the other two, it lies but little west of a straight line between them.

Machin we found to be a regular hog of a Kaffir, both in nature and appearance. It was dusk when we crossed the hills and entered the small valley in which the town is built, and after outspanning we went to an audience with the big man. *Big* indeed! He seemed far too fat and

monstrous ever to stand up alone, much less walk. We found him lying propped up with black-looking blankets on an equally objectionable mat. He grunted forth a "Saka bona?" then demanded either a couple of "upondos" (pounds sterling) or a gun, as toll for the passage of our waggons. Already, at this out-of-the-way place, the value of British gold was appreciated—for the rum or powder, probably, that could be obtained for it in the neighbouring Transvaal. I say "neighbouring," because, although the astute politicians and draughtsmen of that stronghold of Boerdom cleverly declared and made to appear on paper as part of their state all these regions, as soon as the gold discovery was reported, not the sign of a Dutchman exists within several hundred miles of Shoshong. The pound per waggon, it appeared, had been exacted since the passage of gold-seekers through his country on their way to the Tatin began. The unwieldy chief expressed no little amazement at our arrival. Neither he nor any of his wise men could make it out. They were certain that we had not passed them on our way to the Tatin, although the road past Shoshong was the only existing one practicable for waggons going to the interior, and such a thing as white men arriving first from the north had never been known before—no! not even in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, who duly put in an appearance to scrutinise and *indarbar* these wonder-exciting strangers, dutifully supported on either side by a pair of affectionate young relatives. At all events, no matter how we came, or where from, Machin was not going to be done out of his toll if he could help it. When we remonstrated, and ventured to remind him that the tax had been arranged and agreed to as applying solely to gold-diggers passing through his country on their way to the Tatin, he replied, logically enough, that if they went another route, but returned by his territory, that they must then pay. The grass was his, the water was his, and the land was his, that huge and sable Shylock took occasion to sententiously observe, and as we could not fly over the latter, and required to use the former commodities, we must pay for it. This, however, we determined not to do. It was the first time during all our long journey—even amongst tribes who had never seen a white man before—that any such tax on travellers had been proposed, so we made up our minds to resist the innovation.

Acting upon a report that we had heard amongst the diggers at the Tatin, to the effect that Machin was in great dread of the Matabeles (from whom he held his lands as a vassal), who were supposed to be angry at the obstruction he had placed upon the passage of white men, traders, &c.—not from motives of philanthropy or free trade, be it known, but because it was taking so much plunder out of their hands—we threatened to report the matter to the Matabele regent; taking that high and mighty black man's name in vain; declaring him to be our very good friend and ally; and giving the now thoroughly frightened and humbled "swinish chief" (as already nick-named) to understand that we had just left him.

This altered the position of matters at once. Machin was thoroughly alarmed; and, while the bloated old savage puffed and blurted forth apologies and anxious queries as to the intentions of the dreaded Matabeles, ludicrously and incoherently jumbled together, his wise men and councillors crowded around us for further information. They had reason to feel rather scared, that great tribe on their northern frontier being by far the most numerous and powerful in South Africa, and as easily able to exterminate the Bamang-wato Bechuanas, as it had already destroyed many other tribes, root and branch.

We heard no more of the proposed tax. *Shimyan* and *jwarlar* were produced for our consumption, and we were invited to witness the usual dancing performances at the *kraal* after dark.

These people were very well supplied with women, who seemed to out-number the men in the proportion of three to one. The dancing was executed entirely by this dusky fair sex, and was different to any that we had previously seen. Joined hand in hand, and formed in numerous circles, the young women and girls stamped in unison, twisted and contorted their arms and bodies, and rolled their sable heads about, in perfect and graceful time to the music made by the usual native instruments—the "Kaffir piano," flutes, gourd guitars, and varied *tum-tums.* The village belle and premier danseuse performed alone, in front of the chief's hut. She was his eldest unmarried daughter, and seemed in a fair way to soon follow the connubial example of her sisters, judging by the unqualified admiration that her Terpsichorean exertions excited amongst the young warriors. At intervals, the circles would cease



DANCE OF THE BECHUANA WOMEN.

dancing, leaving their best and most accomplished members to continue alone. But the chief's daughter—whose name was perfectly unpronounceable to European tongues, being a combination of the guttural clicks, something like Xoxotexo—by far surpassed them all. It was really wonderful with what perfect accuracy every muscle in her body seemed to keep time with the wild melody. As it rose in energy, so her movements increased in impassioned gesticulation ; they were more than a mere dumb show, they were actually expressive, and portrayed a variety of emotion at the will of the clever performer. Except the dancing of the *nautch* girls in India, I have never seen anything to equal the *abandon*, expression, the languor, the passion, and the voluptuousness of that dusky belle's display.

At daylight in the morning the whole village was thrown into a state of excitement by the arrival of a vast flight of locusts. The heavens were darkened with that enormous quantity of insects as if by a dense cloud. When they settled, which they did over all the fields of the *kraal*, every blade and stalk of vegetation was covered with their crawling bodies. They were of a large species, more than two inches long, dark green and light brown in colour. Fortunately for the people of Shoshong, most of their crops had been gathered in and stored ; whatever remained uncut was devoured clean away by that devastating plague as though the land had been burnt bare by fire. But these ingenious Kaffirs had a cunning way of retaliating upon the innumerable destroyers of their crops. The locusts eat their food, so they eat the locusts. In every direction they were to be seen gathering the crawling things, which, singularly enough, never seem to fly away for anything when once they have settled from a flight. Besides collecting them in great heaps, and filling every utensil, for present use, they killed vast numbers to dry in the sun and preserve. Fires were lighted by the dozen, and around these the Bechuanas might be seen in hundreds, men, women, and children, roasting and devouring the green insects. Like their cooking of beef, they did not wait for the choice morsels to be well done, but could be seen shoving them into their capacious mouths whilst the legs were yet moving and writhing about! It spoiled our appetite for breakfast, and we inspanned and bade adieu to Shoshong as soon as possible.

This town must contain at least 15,000 inhabitants, and is surrounded by hills broken and tossed in the wildest and most fantastic manner. One *kloof* attracted our attention in particular; it was the reservoir of the place. Between vast basaltic rocks towering up to at least 150 feet, was a still, deep, and pellucid pool of pure cold water, supplied by a spring.

At every spot we outspanned now, Kaffirs came riding to us on bullocks, and bringing sheep, ivory, maize, or vegetables to trade with. They did not



KAFFIRS COMING TO TRADE.

seem to possess any horses, and the ox was the national saddle animal, or rather, riding animal without a saddle. It certainly is not a dignified way of travelling, and cannot be very comfortable, but the natives rode along with as much gravity and satisfaction as though they had been mounted on Arabian chargers. The eagerness with which they thronged around our tent and waggons to trade, proved that we were getting into parts adjacent to, and well acquainted with the prominent characteristic of civilisation.

A few days after leaving Shoshong we entered the Transvaal Republic, but it was long before we came upon traces of a Dutchman.

There was one thing that particularly attracted our attention : of the numerous natives living about—Basutos, Bechuanas, and Zulus—a great proportion carried guns. This was so different to Natal, where the law stringently prevents a native from owning fire-arms under all sorts of terrible penalties, and the colonists seem so greatly alarmed at the very idea of a Kaffir getting a gun, that we could not avoid drawing comparisons between the courage of the Boers and the Natalians not altogether favourable to the latter. Although land-locked, far beyond Natal in the interior, surrounded by powerful tribes of warlike savages—many of whom live within their state in unbroken strength, instead of a native population of refugees—and without a strong body of regular troops and a powerful mother country to support them, the sturdy Boers, though not nearly so numerous as the colonists of Natal, live without fear of the Kaffirs, and make themselves far more respected by the latter than do their Anglo-Saxon neighbours. In spite of their guns, scarcely a native passed us without pulling off his hat (when he had one) and exclaiming "Goed dacht, baas." He would have jostled you in Natal.

Eighteen days after leaving Shoshong we arrived at the pretty little town of Rustenberg, at the foot of the Magliesburg hills. There must be 200 or 300 inhabitants here, mostly Dutch, but with a few English. The houses are surrounded with gardens containing orange, lemon, peach, fig, pomegranate, and banana trees ; whilst coffee, cotton, and sugar plantations stretch out on the land close under the shelter of the hills.

We only halted here a few hours, to learn the news, take in a supply of fruit—so welcome after our long deprivation—and enjoy the strong coffee and schnaps of the Field Cornet.

As we passed on by the Magliesburg hills we looked out for traces of gold, meeting none, of course, but finding signs of copper and iron pyrites.

Within a week we came to the next town, Potchefstroom, second to Pretoria—the capital of the state—only. This, also, is a pretty and regular Dutch place. It consists of one main street, perhaps two miles long, lined with trees. On the banks of a river of fine running water stand many flour mills, for the Transvaal is a wheat and grain-growing country, and this is the centre of one of the richest districts.

At Potchefstroon our company divided, and the original members parted with Roger and the Van Meyers, who had relatives there, and remained behind to select a new farm in the neighbourhood, in which they were joined by their new relative.

We were very hospitably received by a brother of Mynheer's, who lived at a beautiful place some four miles out of the city. A week after our arrival Roger and the fair Carlotta were made man and wife at the plain modest little Dutch church. Although everything was conducted quietly, and there was but small display, every one was happy, which was far better, and is not, perhaps, always the case where there is much greater grandeur and ostentation.

After a marriage it is the orthodox thing to conclude (that being, I suppose, considered a pretty important institution in the existence of the world), and I cannot do better than retire gracefully at a period so auspicious. I might have written much of the loves of our friends—the course of which *did* run smooth, and long may it continue to do so!—but then I never intended to do more than narrate the principal events of our search "after Ophir," and, besides, have no authority to take any liberties with the lovers' private affairs.

My record of our travels and adventures has come to an end. After that blissful termination of our expedition at Potchefstroom, nothing noteworthy occurred during the journey of our remaining number to Natal, which we entered by the pass through the Drakensberg exactly seven months and a half after our departure.

The "long Yankee" and his brother settled in the colony as coffee-planters, whilst Monsieur Louis plants tobacco. They were doing pretty well when last I heard from them, whilst the stock farm in the Transvaal was flourishing, and an increase expected in its population.

For my part, I consider Natal one of the most wretchedly dull, unattractive, and lifeless spots in all the world. Steady, domestic people, if situated so happily as Roger, could, perhaps, endure it with love in a cottage. *I* looked out for the first ship homeward bound. Without so absorbing a tie as a beloved wife and family a man might manage to drag out a miserable existence in Natal, but to live——No!

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